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THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN IN THE MERCERSBURG PERIOD, 1840-1852

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CHAPTER I

PRE-MERCERSBURG

From 1840-1852 John Williamson Nevin was a professor at the German Reformed Seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. Nevin and a fellow professor Philip Schaf who joined the Mercersburg faculty in 1844 gave voice to a system of theology known as "Mercersburg Theology." Our interest in this study is primarily in Nevin and the doctrines of the sacraments, Christ, and the Church which he set at the heart of this system which emerges in his writing in 1844. The distinctiveness and significance of Nevin's theology after 1844 is to be seen in part in terms of reaction against the theological system in which he had been reared in the Presbyterian Church, and in which he had been educated at Princeton, namely, the system of the Westminster Confession and Federal or Covenant Theology as it modified rigid Calvinism.

From 1830 to 1840 Nevin was professor of Biblical Literature in Western Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church. In 1840 he went to the seminary of the German Reformed Church at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. During his years at Western and his early years at Mercersburg Nevin was oriented theologically to Federal or Covenant Theology as it modified rigid Calvinism. In 1844 two works of Nevin appeared which indicate an extensive and radical reorganization of his whole theological outlook.

This revolutionary change is to be seen most clearly in a sermon titled "Catholic Unity" delivered in August 1844 before the Triennial Convention of the German and Dutch Reformed churches. "Catholic Unity" spelled out in clear terms the major themes on the subject of Christ, church and sacraments which were characteristic of Mercersburg Theology. This mature statement of the Mercersburg themes was previewed in the last chapter of the second edition of The Anxious Bench which was published early in 1844.

Between 1828 when he wrote "A Summary of Biblical Antiquities" while still at Princeton and 1844 Nevin wrote extensively on a variety of subjects. There is therefore a large body of material produced during this period which would have to be explored in order to trace the development of Nevin's thought to the emergence of the point of view which appears in "Catholic Unity." However, such a study would involve delving into and summarizing many matters which are outside the main focus of this study, namely, the theology of Nevin in his Mercersburg period, 1840-1852. Further, on the basis of his writings during the period between 1828-1844 it is difficult to demonstrate changes in his thought. According to his autobiography "My Own Life" published in 1870, there had been movement in his thinking. It is our purpose, therefore, in the first two chapters of this study to simply trace the external biography of Nevin for the years 1830-1844, and to indicate on the basis of some of his pronouncements during the period and of his autobiography where Nevin stood theologically during this period and the issues on which he indicates that he changed his mind in terms of the post-1844 orientation.

Up to the time of his departure for Union College in 1817, Nevin lived at Herron's Branch and Strasburg near Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, where he was born in 1803. He was of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian stock. His father, John Nevin, was a farmer, and a quiet studious man who had graduated from Dickinson College in the same class with Roger B. Taney, afterwards Chief Justice of the United States. When his son John had finished parochial school, he took over his education and gave him a thorough grounding in Latin and Greek, so that he was prepared to enter college at the age of fourteen.

Nevin says his early religious training was according to the ancient Presbyterian faith and practice which was grounded theologically in the Westminster Shorter Catechism and the Larger Catechism. It was based throughout

> . . . on the idea of covenant family religion, of church membership by a holy act of God in baptism; and following this as a logical sequence, there was regular catechetical training of the young, with direct reference to their coming to the Lord's table. In one word, all proceeded on the theory of sacramental educational religion, as it had belonged properly to all the national branches of the Reformed Church in Europe from the beginning.[1]

In this system church, school and home cooperated in the process of religious education. As soon as children could speak they were drilled in simple Bible questions. Then they were instructed in the Mother's Catechism followed by the Westminster

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[1] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: My Childhood and Early Youth," Reformed Church Messenger (Chambersburg, Pa.: Board of Publications of the Synod of the German Reformed Church, 1870), p. 1788.

Shorter Catechism. Sunday evening in the home was generally devoted to catechization. The parochial school took up the process, and the schoolmaster usually examined his students each week on the catechism. The pastor considered catechization a major part of his pastoral work. One year he might meet with separate families; the next year he might bring together at the schoolhouse or in a private dwelling the families in one vicinity for instruction and examination.[2]

In "My Own Life" Nevin reminisces:

> The system was churchly, as holding the Church in her visible character to be the medium of salvation for her baptized children in the sense of that memorable declaration of Calvin (_Inst._ lv.1.4) where, speaking of her title, Mother, he says: There is no other entrance into life, save as she may conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us from her breasts, and embrace us in her loving care to the end.[3]

Church life made much of "sound doctrine, wonderfully bound to established forms; and not without a large sense of the objective side of religion embodied in the means of grace."[4] For example, he cites the baptism of children of church members and their reception into the "Christian covenant" at an early date. That is, in the judgment of the Church Session, based upon an examination of the prospect's faith and life, there was reason to believe that God had numbered such a one within the great Church Universal, as one standing within the covenant of grace. As such, he was allowed to join the local congregation and to partake of the means of grace there offered.[5] He remembers the "communion season" as being a four-day meeting with a real and not simply nominal fast on Friday preceding the Lord's table on the Lord's Day.

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[2] _Ibid_.

[3] _Ibid_.

[4] _Ibid_.

He recalls this system by way of contrast with the "New England Puritan system" of religion which he encountered while a student at Union College. He entered Union in 1817 at the suggestion of his uncle Captain John Williamson, a wealthy merchant for whom he was named. Nevin says religious concerns there were not integral to the college curriculum but were "left to outside, more or less sporadic irregular appliances altogether." In a revival at Union under the preaching of Asahel Nettleton he had his first contact with ". . . the genius of New England Protestantism in its character of contradiction to the old Reformed faith. . . ." There he was treated as a religious outcast, made to break with his Christian past, and to make a public profession of religion as though he had had no previous religious training or relationship to the church.[6]

From the perspective of 1870 he says of the revival:

> It was based throughout on the principle that regeneration and conversion lay outside the Church, had nothing to do with baptism and Christian education, required rather a looking away from all this as more of a bar than a help to the process. . . .[7]

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[5] L. J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), p. 17.

[6] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Four Years of College Life," Reformed Church Messenger, March 9, 1870, p. 1789.

[7] Ibid.

Conversion was followed by

> . . . alternating frames and states, and introverted self-inspection, more or less, under the guidance of some such work as Edwards on the Affections. An intense subjectivity, in one word, which is always something impotent and poor, took the place of a proper contemplation of the grand and glorious objectivities of the Christian life, in which all the true power of the Gospel lies. . . . Alas, where was my mother, the Church, at the very time I most needed her fostering arms? Where was she, I mean, with her true sacramental sympathy and care? How much better had it been for me, if I had only been drawn from myself, by some right soul communication of the old Christian Creed![8]

Accepting the trustworthiness of Nevin's recollections, it is evident that he very early had a high estimate of the sacraments, of sound doctrine, of the Church. The contrast of this sacramental churchly educational system with the revivalism of the period with its emphasis on conversion, its individualism and subjectivism, and its minimizing of sound doctrine and the Church set up a conflict in Nevin's mind. He returned home in 1821 and spent two years there trying to recover from an illness which had developed while at Union. He notes that during this period his religion was morbidly preoccupied with feelings.

> . . . it was intensively subjective and introspective. Instead of looking to the outward redeeming facts and power of Christianity, it was too much a habit of looking into its own constitution, as if to be satisfied with the goodness of this first of all, were the only way to true religious satisfaction in any other form.[9]

His inclination was outwardly toward the ". . . regularities of the old Presbyterian life . . ." but ". . . in thought and feeling went far, at the same time, in justifying methodistical modes of piety, as being on the whole, perhaps of more account for the salvation of the world."[10] He saw only a state of dead formality in the services of his old home church and felt it difficult to believe that the older folk had any religion at all. Under the impact of revivalism the catechetical system was being abandoned widely in favor of "methodistical modes of piety" while at the same time the church at Middle Spring clung to the mere form of the regularities of the old Protestant life. The conflict of the old and the new continued to plague him through these years at home.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Between Schenectady and Princeton," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (March 16, 1870), 1790.

He entered Princeton in 1823 to study theology as yet undecided as to what his life work would be. It appeared to be the unanimous opinion of his friends and family that he was destined for the ministry. He felt shut up to the profession in his own mind in the sense that he could not think seriously of any other profession. He says he entered the school with trepidation, wondering if he could devote himself with a free conscience to the ministry and fearful that his piety would not measure up to the piety of the Princeton divinity students who, when they appeared among the simple folk at Shippensburg, had a certain "air of conscious sanctimony" about them.[11]

At Princeton he studied under Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. Of his experience at Princeton he remembered that much of the instruction "went against the new" and "in favor of the old," and was true to Presbyterian "divinity and piety of the seventeenth century."[12] Theologically Princeton was oriented to Covenant Theology and the professors evidently operated in a devout, evangelical atmosphere. In his autobiography Nevin speaks of the Sunday afternoon conferences conducted by Dr. Alexander, whose soul-searching and awakening casuistry produced in him a "soul crisis" which was far deeper than the crisis of what was called his conversion experience at Union. However, when his own religious life, belonging as it did to "the Presbyterianism of the Westminster Assembly" came into contact with the prevailing style of religion among the students in the seminary, namely, the Puritan system with revivalism, there was produced in him a dualism in theology which "could be felt better than explained."[13] The conflict of the two forces which began at Union, and plagued him at Middle Spring, continued through his years at Princeton, though toward the end of his course, he says, the conservative tendency which prevailed with him later began to gain the upper hand. The two different theories or schemes of piety at work in his mind refused to coalesce.

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[10] Ibid. [11] Ibid.

Nevin was at Princeton during the years 1823-1828. His chief interest was in Biblical theology taught by Charles Hodge. During the years 1827-1828 he substituted in the department of Oriental and Biblical Literature for Hodge who was on leave for study in Germany. During this period Nevin wrote A Summary of Biblical Antiquities setting forth his understanding of the nature and content of Christianity. Before he left Princeton in 1828 Nevin had been engaged as professor of Biblical Literature for the Western Theological Seminary of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. His interest during his third year at Princeton had been to seek employment in a classical school, but the turn of events at Princeton and the opportunity to go to Western settled the question of his future.

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[12] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Five Years at Princeton," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (March 23, 1870), 1791.

[13] Ibid.

Nevin assumed his duties as professor of Biblical Literature at Western early in 1830 and remained in this capacity until he removed to Mercersburg early in 1840. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he preached extensively, the remuneration for such services going into the seminary treasury at his insistence. During the years 1833-1834 and part of 1835 he edited a weekly journal titled Friend for the "Young Men's Society of Pittsburgh and vicinity." The design of this journal was". . . the defense of all Christian virtue, on the outside of all religious denominationalism strictly so-called."[14] It aimed to set a high standard of public morality based on ". . . the high platform of the Gospel . . ."[15] It brought infidelity, fashionable amusements, ladies' fairs, theatrical entertainments, intemperance, slavery, etc., ". . . under its animadversion in the most pronounced way, causing its boldness to be praised in one direction, while it gave offense, of course, in another."[16] Nevin was threatened with a cow-hiding for an attack on an attempt to start a theatre in Pittsburgh. Mob action against the paper was an imminent possibility at one time on account of its "supposed incendiarism" in the area of anti-slavery agitation.[17] Temperance received a large share of attention in the Friend and a supplement known as the Temperance Register, a small two-penny sheet, was circulated every two weeks to give this cause a wider reading than the Friend provided. Dissatisfaction with the venture inside the society and the offense taken by the public, especially on the subject of slavery, caused Nevin to withdraw as editor of the Friend. On the subject of slavery Nevin says that he never considered himself a fanatic or an incendiary, that he belonged to no anti-slavery society, that he was no missionary in the cause, and that he openly condemned Mr. Garrison and others of like stripe as being irreligious and unpatriotic in their spirit. The Friend, he said, originally favored colonization of slaves, but did not allow this to silence it on the question of home emancipation or on the fact that slavery was a great moral evil that ought to be abolished, and as such was subject to religious censure and criticism like any other evil. On this subject Nevin appears to have changed his point of view from one favoring colonization to one favoring abolitionism, a fact which he tends to play down in his autobiography.

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[14] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Ten Years Work in the West," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (May 4, 1870), 1797.

[15] Ibid.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Testimony against Schism and Slavery," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (May 11, 1870), 1793.

> And so before I knew hardly how it came to pass, especially after the publication of the *Friend* had come into my hands, I found that I had begun to be looked upon and spoken of, in certain quarters, as actually a disturber of public peace. One prominent physician in the place, I remember, allowed himself publicly in the street to characterize me, up and down, as in his opinion "the most dangerous man in all Pittsburgh."[18]

One gathers that Nevin gave up the editorship of the *Friend* with a sigh of relief. On the subject of slavery he was evidently out of step both with public sentiment in Pittsburgh and with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church which felt that this was a subject that ought to be studiously avoided.[19]

While Nevin was teaching at Western the issues between New School and Old School Presbyterianism came to a head. The New School contended for a liberal interpretation of the doctrinal standards of the church, favored continuing the Plan of Union of 1801 with the Congregational Church, and was vocally opposed to slavery. The Old School was opposed to the Plan of Union, to most interdenominational projects, to abolitionism and discussion of the slavery question, and to any modification in the doctrine or polity of the church. The theological issues between the two schools played a considerable role in the controversy. Some of the New School men had come into the Presbyterian ministry under the Plan of Union. They had been trained at Yale, and carried with them the influence of Nathaniel Taylor's New Haven

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[18] *Ibid*.

[19] T. Appel, *The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin* (Philadelphia, 1889), pp. 74-76.

Theology. The case of Albert Barnes, Presbyterian minister at Morristown, New Jersey, brought the difference between the two Schools into the open and into the General Assembly. Barnes admitted his agreement with New Haven Theology and conceded that it was out of harmony with the Westminster Confession. In 1836 his Synod suspended him, but the General Assembly reversed the decision. In the Assembly of 1837 the Old School marshalled its forces and instituted measures which resulted in the New School body being "read out" of the church, with Nevin's alma mater Princeton throwing its influence on the side of the Old School.

Of his position in the quarrel Nevin says, ". . . my own theological sympathies were all along with the Old School. . . ." However, he felt that the Old School position had been urged forward "in an extreme way in certain quarters," and he deprecated the idea that the Pittsburgh Synod should have to take part in an Eastern quarrel. When the rupture came, he accepted it as a fact. But when he gave his support to the "adhering Act" which declared the allegiance of his Presbytery to the Old School General Assembly as the true successor of the Presbyterian Church, he received permission of the Presbytery to record his explanation that his vote meant simply that he was casting his lot with the Old School. It did not indicate that he was endorsing the view that the Old School Assembly was the only true and lawful successor of the Presbyterian Church in the sense of making the existence of either Assembly an article of faith.[20]

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[20] Nevin, "My Own Life: Ten Years Work in the West."

Nevin resigned his position at Western in 1840 and shortly thereafter accepted the call to a professorship at Mercersburg. In the interval between 1837 and his resignation he had written a series titled "Faith" in which he castigated those in the Presbyterian Church who stickled for a rigid orthodoxy, accepted uncritically and mechanically, and he roundly criticised the lifeless, formal brand of church life which he found among orthodox Presbyterians. Whether this criticism was directed at the Old School is not clear, but one can scarcely imagine a staunch Presbyterian of the Old School being happy with Nevin's characterization of orthodox Presbyterianism. His dissatisfaction with the manner in which Presbyterians held to the tradition coupled with his abortive venture into temperance and slavery reform may have produced a situation which made it not too difficult for him to leave the Presbyterian Church for the German Reformed Church. James I. Good, German Reformed historian, suggests that Nevin's position at Western had become "uncomfortable," to say the least.

Before going to Western Nevin had spent over a year at home. During this period he says he preached extensively having determined to master the art of preaching without manuscript. He notes that he championed the cause of temperance and that his sermons were concerned largely with "so-called evangelical truths of Christianity as I then understood them" not in a "ranting, methodistical vein" but "in a thorough, earnest and practical way."[21]

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[21] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Between Princeton and Pittsburgh," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (March 30, 1870), 1792.

Since his sermons during this period were not preserved we are left to infer the content of his preaching and theology from his recollections in his autobiography, and from his work A Summary of Biblical Antiquities produced while teaching at Princeton, a thorough exposition of Covenant Theology as developed by Cocceius and Witsius and transmitted via Turretin to America in the Federalism of Nevin's teacher Charles Hodge.[22]

Covenant or Federal Theology has its roots in Calvin's concept of the absolute sovereignty of God, the doctrine of the eternal decrees, man's depravity, predestination and election. But Calvin's system was modified by sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed thought which reveals the ". . . poignant inability . . ." of Calvin's disciples to bear up under his rigid predestinarianism and his demand that man ". . . contemplate with steady, unblinking resolution the absolute incomprehensible and transcendent sovereignty of God . . ." who required not that he be understood but adored.[23] Covenant theology took the harsh edge off Calvinism by asserting that though God was sovereign and past knowing and could indeed rule by fixed and arbitrary decrees, yet he had laid aside his prerogatives and had entered into a series of covenants with man. Through these God bound himself to work in a predictable and reasonable rather than in an unpredictable and arbitrary manner. The doctrine of God's sovereignty was protected by the assertion that the covenants came about by voluntary condescension on the part of God who by arbitrary fiat established them and thus designated the specific form which from age to age his will required or assumed for man. In this way the uncertainty to which man was subject was relieved, and he could hope to find in his life the evidences of his being among the elect.

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[22] James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1912), p. 223.

[23] P. Miller, "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXII (Boston, 1937), 248.

Early Covenant theologians spoke of only one covenant, that of grace in which the Father, in consideration of an agreement entered into with the Son, including Christ's promise of obedience even unto death, agreed to accept his deed as satisfaction equivalent to the punishment due guilty man and to accept the persons of the elect as righteous for his sake. Eventually the covenant idea was extended to include God's dealings with man before the fall of Adam as well. In the covenant of works made before the Fall with Adam the federal head of the race God revealed the substance of the moral law. Perfect holiness or obedience to the law was to be the condition of salvation. The covenant of grace was made necessary by Adam's failure and it acquaints man with the plan devised by God to repair Adam's fault. In addition to the substance of the moral law, and Christ's work of satisfaction in terms of substitutionary atonement, the covenant of grace includes sacraments and ceremonies which typify Christ and seal to believers the grace he has merited for them. Being signs and seals of the covenant, the sacraments must be rightly administered and participation must be reserved to those rightly privileged to do so. The question of those who may participate subsequently became a matter of disagreement as, for example, in the instance of the Half-Way Covenant in the New England Puritanism. A further item in Christ's contract with the Father was an agreement that the Holy Spirit would be granted to the elect to make possible the exercise of saving faith of which they are incapable by nature.

The early exposition of the Covenant theology, for example, the Westminster Confession, saw the Old Testament law of Moses and the gospel of Christ as different forms of the one covenant of grace, the Old Testament being the type of which the New Testament is the reality. But later theologians, Cocceius among them, recognized the two covenants and various historic stages as well in the administrations of the dispensations in the Old and New Testaments each with its own sacraments. This enabled them to deal more realistically with the facts of Biblical history.[24]

Nevin faithfully spelled out this theology, as modified by Cocceius, in his Biblical Antiquities. He commented on the doctrine of the Church also and saw the Church as beginning with the covenant of grace immediately after the fall of Adam. He said that the true church is the invisible church. As visible the church comprehends all who profess to be God's people, whether truly pious or not. The invisible church, that is as it appears to the eye of God, as distinguished from its outward form in history, embraces only those who are really and truly the people of Christ. Since the fall, the method by which men were saved has always been the same, that is either by faith in Christ's redemption in terms of promise or by faith in his death as an accomplished fact. He noted the continuance of the obligation to obey the moral law for the simple reason that it was the will of God. He noted the various dispensations through which the covenant of grace was administered, each dispensation making the covenant more explicit and hedging it with rites and ceremonies designed both to preserve true religion and to be a figurative representation, type or shadow of the truth of the gospel, especially the infinite holiness of God, the foretelling of Christ's death and the work of redemption he would accomplish. The New Testament sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace. In fact, he said, the whole of the Bible is to be understood in terms of the formula "Jesus Christ crucified to save a lost world."[25]

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[24] Ibid. Also Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.

Coming as it does in the midst of his years at Princeton, one may infer that this exposition is an accurate statement of the point of view of Biblical theology as it was taught at Princeton. It views Christianity in terms of a revealed system, based upon God's arbitrary fiat, setting forth the divine machinery for man's salvation. It sees Christ as the federal head of the elect or the saved as Adam was the federal head or representative of the race fallen. God's dealing in the covenants was with these heads of the race, not with men themselves. Adam's failure was imputed to his posterity as a ". . . legal responsibility and not as an inherent disease . . ." and similarly Christ stood in a legal sense in probation on behalf of the elect.[26] Nevin appears to have been unwilling to accept the imputation of Adam's sin as a simply legal transaction and wherever he discusses this question he sees man's sharing Adam's failure as an integral part of his nature as it stemmed from Adam. For Nevin man's fallen nature is an "inherent disease," as well as a legal responsibility.

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[25] J. W. Nevin, A Summary of Biblical Antiquities (Philadelphia, 1849), p. 7.

Covenant Theology ". . . was based on the view that man's reason or understanding was the point of contact for the Holy Spirit's regenerating influence . . ."[27] Operating within the tenets of Faculty Psychology it held that man is possessed of the faculties of reason or understanding, will and affections. The role of reason is to guide the will and affections. This was the order of things until the Fall when the will gained ascendence over reason and the affections were set free to contend against each other. Regeneration involves the reordering of man's faculties so that reason is restored to its rightful place enabling the individual to see his lost state and to understand his need for Christ and the gospel. Once this principle or habit is established in the mind and the will is firmly fixed on Christ, faith springs up which is purifying and justifying and works obedience. Since obedience to God's eternal law is the first duty of man, the object of regeneration is to bring about such obedience. Nevin also held to this concept of the process of regeneration.

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[26] Miller, pp. 282 f.

[27] Trinterud, p. 171.

Illustrative of Nevin's theological orientation prior to 1844 are several of his sermons which were published in The Presbyterian Preacher during his years at Western. The October 1832 issue of the Presbyterian Preacher carried a sermon by Nevin which defended the doctrine of the Trinity against the denial of the Unitarians that to Christ is to be ascribed the character of true as well as perfect manhood. Nevin declared that the doctrine of two natures in Christ was above reason, mysterious and incomprehensible. But it is not repugnant to reason. Of particular interest is his statement that the Trinitarian doctrine "is not a mere opinion, a speculative dogma to be received and treasured up with other notions in the intellect. . . . It is a doctrine to be apprehended by the heart, more than by the understanding, a thing of feeling far more than pure intellection."[28] In the context of his discussion he seems to be saying that faith is a grasping by the mind of the inner truth of the doctrine in terms of feeling rather than by speculative or rational processes. Faith is a feeling for the inner truth of a doctrine, for the realities of the spiritual world rather than the mechanical acceptance by reason of doctrine necessary to salvation.

In July of 1833 a sermon entitled "Election Not Contrary to a Free Gospel" appeared in The Presbyterian Preacher. Here Nevin deals with the problem of election versus man's freedom. The doctrine of the Bible, he says, is that the blessings of the gospel are freely offered to all men alike, and men are free to accept or reject them. But the Bible is also clear that men who embrace Christ are led to do so "only by the intervention of an extraordinary impulse from God himself" which makes men "willing to come to him for life."[29] How reconcile freedom with election?

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[28] Nevin, "The Trinitarian and Unitarian Doctrine of the Person of Christ," The Presbyterian Preacher, V (October, 1832), 65.

The answer is to be found both in experience and in man's nature as moral. All of life exhibits men acting and living under perfect freedom, at the same time men recognize the sovereign will of God which makes one man rich and another man poor. Freedom and election thus exist side by side in nature, as part of the fundamental structure of life. In religion men are required to act freely, just as they do in the ordinary affairs of life. The feeling of personal free agency and responsibility is never so full as when men are most deeply aware of the sovereignty of God, and the more the individual feels the necessity of free and responsible action in the business of his salvation, the more he feels the need of help from on high. Human experience overcomes the contradiction which reason sees between freedom and election.

Even if one considers these doctrines abstractly and speculatively the contradiction is only one of appearance and not real. And here Nevin interprets the decrees of God in terms of the fact that on the basis of the moral constitution of man as decreed by God, God foreknows the actions of men. And if God has foreknowledge of action, it is certain the action will take place without having its freeness brought into question at all. This is to say that men act freely within the constitution of their nature as moral, and to act freely is to act according to the principles of this moral nature. "The sovereignty of God in this case is simply the ground-work of that particular constitution of life out of which the actions of men proceed."[30] God's plan is the pattern according to which all things take place. Who would have it otherwise, left to chance or mere fate for example!

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[29] J. W. Nevin, "Election Not Contrary to a Free Gospel," The Presbyterian Preacher (July, 1833), p. 211.

Inherent within the order decreed by God, is the fact of election, namely, that man is unable freely to appropriate the salvation freely offered by God without the extraordinary help which only God can give. Man's inability here is the result of the wreck of his nature as fallen and the action of God consists of his bringing to life again man's original capacity for exercising faith.

On January 21, 1838, at the Presbyterian Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, Nevin delivered a sermon titled "The Seal of the Spirit" in which he spells out in clear terms the doctrine that in regeneration the mind is illuminated by the Holy Spirit giving the believer a new habit or principle of mind with the consequent reordering of the faculties. The work of the Spirit generally is "a saving faith which consists in the entire new system of thoughts and feelings."[31] This action takes place by a process of instruction, altogether superhuman, and by way of apprehension that goes beyond mere speculative understanding. The logical forms of religion can be understood by the natural understanding, the living realities cannot. The objective revelation must be apprehended subjectively and this requires a deeper form of thought than speculation or assent. Such a form is the organ of faith. This organ, "the organ of holding immediate and direct correspondence with the spiritual world," slumbers in the sinner's soul, "overwhelmed in a merely sensuous existence till it is powerfully called into existence by the Holy Ghost. . . ."[32] While still holding to reason or understanding as the point of contact for the Holy Spirit's regenerating influence, it is clear that Nevin defines faith as something more than the assent of mind to the truths of the gospel.

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[30] Ibid., p. 233.

The working of faith on the understanding results in "a new tendency or moral bent impressed on the will and the affections by which they are brought into harmony with the truth thus spiritually discerned."[33] Without this reordering of the faculties man is still in a state of enmity with God. But with the reordering of the faculties the mind sees God's laws as just and holy, the will is fastened on them and the affections are settled more firmly on spiritual things. This work of Spirit imparts a conscious awareness on the part of the believer of pardon and deliverance from the claims of the law and of adoption by God. Here Nevin stands clearly with the legal substitutionary theory of atonement of Covenant Theology. For in being released from the bondage of the law to the inward freedom of the gospel the sinner is pointed to ". . . a real atonement, already offered to God and accepted by him as available for the sinner's justification in the chancery of heaven," and as soon "as the consent of mind is obtained to this method of righteousness, the deliverance which it offers is his own. The sentence of condemnation recorded against him at once falls away."[34] All this constitutes for the believer a sure and certain pledge of salvation in the life to come. "All that are sealed now are saved forever."[35] This being the manner in which God has bound himself to deal with men, it is the duty of all to secure for themselves those forms of experience by which believers are sealed by the use of the resources of holiness and salvation which God has provided in the new covenant in Christ.

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[31] J.W. Nevin, The Seal of the Spirit (Pittsburgh, 1838) p. 5.

[32] Ibid., p. 7. [33] Ibid.

This sermon is as clear as an assertion of Nevin's doctrines of Christ, the atonement, and salvation as one finds during the period 1830-1844, and in company with his other sermons it bears out the trustworthiness of Nevin's estimate of 1870 that when he taught at Western his theology was Calvinism modified by the Federal Theology of Cocceius and Witsius, which took in the notion of covenants allowing a certain right to the human side of God's dealings with mankind.

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[34] Ibid., p. 10.

[35] Ibid., p. 16.

While Nevin stood within the framework of Covenant Theology and Princeton scholasticism while at Western, he undoubtedly was unhappy about some aspects of reigning orthodoxy and church life within the Presbyterian Church. This fact is evidenced in the series on "Faith" originally published in the Presbyterian Advocate and reprinted in the Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church during the early months of 1840. In these articles Nevin is devastatingly critical of various attitudes or states of mind which he found in the Presbyterian Church masquerading under the guise of faith, all of which he rejects as false.

He found those who held to faith as "notion" or the attitude that Christianity is a system of truths to be taken on authority and held without critical examination. They included those who accepted the Westminster Confession as the most sound and perfect exposition ever made of the doctrine of the Bible, though he doubted that they had ever read it, and were accepted into the church on this basis. Somewhat deeper than notion was "opinion" which indicated simply that the mind, refusing to acquiesce in the tradition of the elders, had instituted an inquiry of its own into the truth of Christianity and had convinced itself of the truth of the system of doctrine of the Presbyterian Church. Others thought of faith in terms of "belief"; that is, they gave assent to the truths of religion as the result of a firm resolution to have such a creed. So they settled down into a "will belief" and held to the scheme, no matter how repugant it may have been, as necessary to their salvation. Still others held to faith in terms of "fancy" or the belief in the working of truth on the imagination in such a way as to give a lively apprehension of the unseen world such as stirs up emotions and desires of a highly spiritual character. Finally there were those who held to faith in terms of "superstition." That is, they turned to outward forms of worship in a merely mechanical way, as though the strict observance of Bible reading, private devotions, Sabbath observance, etc., fulfilled all religious obligations and left them free to go about their everyday lives unchanged by all of this.

All this, Nevin concludes, leaves men complacent and secure in creeds and forms. It grounds faith in the conclusions of reason and observation. It turns the gospel into a scheme of doctrines and laws. It makes righteousness to be the result of the exertion of self-will. Its worship repeats within Protestantism pagan systems of worship which affect only the imagination by rites and ceremonies. It is analagous to the elaborate system of Roman Catholicism built up for dramatic effect, "the art of Hell" which undermines the spiritualities of religion in favor of the sensualities of the carnal life. It turns worship into "spiritual machinery" aimed at artful effect and the natural sensibilities of the worshipper. The whole system leaves practically untouched the will of man, and scarcely penetrates to the inner power of the faith.

Nevin's characterization of the Presbyterian is not one calculated to elicit praise from his brethren. He is received into the church, says Nevin, on the basis of an experience of regeneration sometimes vaguely distributed through the period of religious education, the vaguer the better, and sometimes explicit as in a revival. He holds to his creed by sheer exertion of his will, whether he does or does not understand it or is or is not convinced of its truth.

> His religious duties are all penances or indulgence taxes. He prays to keep his conscience quiet in the midst of his sins; he is strict on the Sabbath, that he may use the week with more freedom for himself; he goes to church, and takes the sacraments, only that he may forget God more comfortably in every other kind of business.[36]

At this point Nevin abruptly ends the series. He has not repudiated the basic structure of Federal Theology, but he has protested against the manner in which the system has been turned into a barren tradition. He has repudiated the definition of faith as the holding of sound doctrine, and the use of forms of worship in a purely mechanical way, both of which leave untouched the character and conduct of the individual. By way of contrast, Nevin notes that true faith enables the mind to penetrate to the inner meaning and spirit of the tradition in a way which raises the mind to a communion with God which carries the will along with it and produces a regenerate person whose life exhibits the fruits of this fact. Faith produces inward godliness rather than outward ostentation and complacent piety.

This attempt to delineate Nevin's theological orientation at Western does not give the whole picture of his religious and intellectual processes during this period. From the point of view of 1870 Nevin suggests that influences were then playing upon him which eventually had a great deal to do with his theological reorientation.

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[36] J. W. Nevin, "Faith," Weekly Messenger, V (March 18, 1840), 930.

Nevin suggests that when he entered upon his duties at Western in 1830 his education was "defective and immature" in "general theology." From that point on, he says, "there has been a certain amount of movement" in his "general theological and ecclesiastical views." Nevin catalogues what he considers the points on which his education was immature and defective, and on which his mind later changed in terms of his post-1844 orientation.

First there was a lack of "proper historical culture" which meant that he saw the history of the church as only a system of dead facts, a barren tradition reaching back dimly at farthest to the sixteenth century. The history he studied at Princeton was of the rationalistic school of Mosheim and Milner, which he says, had no organization, was dry, dreary and fragmentary.

> I believe, of course, in "the great apostacy" which was supposed to have started almost immediately after the age of the apostles; which turned primitive Presbyterianism, first into common prelacy, and then into the full blown Hierarchy of the fourth century; and which converted the church itself finally in the middle ages into the synagogue of Satan, with the "Man of Sin" (antichrist) presiding over it in the person of the Roman Pope. The whole thousand years before the Reformation were, to my mind, a sort of Devil's millenium, during which the powers of darkness had their own way, while the real life of Christianity had been kept up mainly, if not wholly, on the outside of the church through such "witnesses of the truth" as the Waldenses, Albigenses, Paulicans and others of like outcaste character, who, it may be presumed, had never been altogether wanting in the Christian world for this purpose.[37]

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[37] J.W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Retrospective Self-Criticism," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (April, 1870), 1793.

He could make no sense of the church fathers; indeed the whole of the first and middle centuries was a bedlam, a howling waste. This general historical ignorance extended also to the post-Reformation period, to the Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic churches, and to the fundamental issues separating the major protestant confessions.

Second, he says he had a defective idea of revelation which he held in terms of the "old mechanical theory." This view saw the Bible as identical with revelation, a system of thoughts, words and doctrines dictated by God and committed to writing by men supernaturally inspired for the purpose. On the basis of this theory he saw the Old and New Testaments as a "general revelation of God's will in the form of so much truth for the understanding; the only rule He has given us, as I had learned from my Catechism, to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him."[38] Since both testaments were but two modes of exhibiting the same truth, Christian doctrine might just as well be substantiated from the Old as well as from the New Testament.

This view of revelation in turn affected his doctrine of the person of Christ. Since revelation had for him "the character of instruction or doctrine for the understanding," he saw Christ as the "medium or appointment only for revealing to men(in the way of doctrinal, intelligible illumination!) the will of God for their salvation."[39] Following Charnock's Christ's Death and

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[38] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Self-Criticism Continued," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (April 13, 1870), 1794.

[39] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Christological Imperfection," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (April 20, 1870), 1795.

Resurrection he says he saw Christ as the "instrumental mechanism" of God's purpose. His death secured the redemption of the elect; his resurrection and exaltation was assurance that the elect would be delivered from the chains of death. Since redemption could only be bought by suffering, and since Christ could suffer only if he had a body, the incarnation was necessary.

This whole system was based on a dualism of nature and the supernatural which never allowed the human and the divine or nature and supernatural to come to any real conjunction so as to give a real, historical character to Christianity.

Nevin says that in 1830 he understood doctrines to be "so many separate, independent truths collected from the Bible," and any concept of a history of dogma with a "historical movement and progressive self-evolution" in doctrine was an anomaly.[40] His theological horizon was limited by sound Presbyterian orthodoxy.

He thought of the church not without a high sense of its "more than human character," but still it was "an abstraction, an ideal generalization, the so-called invisible Church."[41]

In discussing his approach to Biblical studies Nevin admits that from the vantage point of the year 1870, close to four decades since he taught at Western, "it is something of a study for me now to make out just how the matter was here to the satisfaction of my own mind; and it is not an easy task then to represent it rightly for others."[42] His recollection was that he believed that theology "must be biblical theology," drawn from the Bible directly "by fair and full interpretation, without regard to any other authority whatever."[43] This method of Biblical interpretation was that of the school of Ernesti and Morus. German literature, Nevin notes, was of two sorts, "one openly rationalistic," "the other relatively orthodox--that is more or less faithful in asserting the supernatural character of Christianity over against the bold infidelity of the opposite."[44]

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[40] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: General Dogmatic Deficiency," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (April 27, 1870), 1797.

[41] Ibid.

According to the more orthodox school to which Ernesti and Morus belonged, the surest and best approach to the Christian religion could come only from "the teachings of the Holy Scriptures held rigorously to the sense of their own language," hence they must be studied apart from all confessional or dogmatic preconceptions. Interpretation of the Bible, said Ernesti, must be governed by the general laws of human language without mystical constructions, double sense, or pre-established rules of faith. Nevin said he virtually belonged to this school as it was championed by Storr and Flatt. He read their Biblical Theology translated by S. S. Schmucker of the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg and issued by Andover Press in 1826 under the auspices of Moses Stuart and Murdock. It found quite a patronage at Princeton. The authors eschewed all metaphysical, speculative and infidel systems of Christianity and were convinced of the absolute necessity of building their faith exclusively on the word of God. Biblical Theology was purely biblical, says Nevin, confining itself to doctrines taught in the sacred volume. It held the Bible to be the medium whereby the light of God's revelation is to take the form of knowledge in our souls, certifying to us the fact of God's supernatural communication. So Biblical Theology set out to prove to the human reason, itself sitting in judgment on the subject, the divine authority of the Scriptures. Having shown this, reason is then able to arrive at a full firm apprehension of the supernatural which it finds to hold simply in the teachings of Jesus set forth in the New Testament under His own promise of inspiration, teachings which are not those of the mere man Jesus but the declarations of God himself. One can see how this school with its frank Biblicism and its appeal to reason would attract the Protestants in the Puritan tradition.

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[42] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Grammatico-Historical Studies," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (May 8, 1870), 1799.

[43] Ibid. [44] Ibid.

Thus, Nevin notes, "imported rationalistic supernaturalism" entered into coalition with "Puritanic evangelical orthodoxy" in America. So at Western in 1830, says Nevin, "I stood in the bosom of the new science of criticism and exegesis, as it had been imported from Germany in the first place and was now generally throughout the country . . ." unaware of its ". . . hidden, dangerous relations to rationalistic infidelity . . ."[45] Nevin eventually abandoned this school, and embraced an approach to Biblical studies which held the Bible to be normative for

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[45] Ibid.

Christian doctrine but only as interpreted in the light of the growing consciousness of the church as to the content of the Bible in terms spelled out by the Apostles' Creed.

While he stood in these prevailing patterns of thought during this period Nevin says his personal religion contained "another mode of experience" which pulled him in a quite different direction. In his reading of Baxter, Flavel, Owen, Howe, and Archbishop Leighton he found an emphasis on "the objective powers of Christianity as the only ground and guarantee for experience in any form."[46]

> It had to do with ideas at least which were held to be of objective force and not merely subjective notions and fancies. Its righteousness of faith stood very distinctly in believing apprehension of a real grace meeting the soul from beyond its own being, and not in any inward persuasion or feeling simply of the soul itself. It made much in particular of religion regarded as a new life, and as being in this respect something more than doctrine or any passing experience.[47]

Other reading during this period such as Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man gave him a sense of religion in terms of God dwelling in the soul, as something which transcended religion as merely intellectual or ethical. He says his favorite devotional reading was Thomas à Kempis' De Imitatione de Christi with its seeking for the interior rather than the exterior sense of the Scriptures. Herder's Spirit of Hebrew Prophecy and Lowth's Lectures had the effect of showing him the need of "a spiritual understanding" as opposed to a simply intellectual apprehension "of the utterances of God's Spirit."[48] His reading of Tholuck and Olshausen had a salutary influence in this direction also. Nevin holds that this mystical element in the older divinity was largely missing in the evangelical orthodoxy of his day which resorted to spiritual jugglery and outward modes of mastering the Bible. The influence exerted by this reading caused him to be increasingly dissatisfied with the reigning order of biblical and theological studies. So during his years at Western Nevin says ". . . there was in me a sense and feeling of much in Christianity which was not to be reached in the way of common thought, but needed for its discernment and appreciation a deeper and more vital mode of knowledge."[49]

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[46] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Pia Desideria," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (June 1, 1870), 36.

[47] Ibid.

During his years at Western Nevin says he also became acquainted with the writings of Augustus Neander, a contemporary German church historian. As a result he experienced what he called his "historical awakening," that is, he was introduced to a new sense of the meaning of history in general and of Church History in particular.

Neander states his concept of church history in the introduction to his General History of the Christian Religion and Church:

> We look upon Christianity not as a system born in the hidden depths of man's nature, but as a power which has come down from heaven, in that heaven has opened itself

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[48] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Hermeneutical Enlargement," Reformed Church Messenger, XXXVI (June 8, 1870), 67.

[49] Ibid.

> to a hostile world--a power which in its essence, as well as its origin, is exalted high above all that man can create with his own powers, and which was designed to impart to him new life, and transform him in his inmost nature.[50]

He thus regards Christianity as a force, a life, and not alone as a system of dogma or a divine power which has come down from heaven. The history of the church is the history of the process of the interpenetration of man's life with the divine life, or the history of the divine life pervading humanity. Neander writes his history in terms of the life of the church in individuals so that the biographical element prevails to the neglect of the institution of the church itself. Neander's method of writing church history stood in sharp contrast to the rationalism of Mosheim and the pragmatism of Planck.

Neander, a student of Schleiermacher, belonged to the new school of religious romanticism which had developed in Germany largely in reaction to Rationalism. Schleiermacher held religion to be prior to theology, and to consist essentially of piety rather than doctrine or ethics. And he defined the distinctiveness of Christianity in terms of the fact that everything in it has relation to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth. This interpretation of Christ with its corollary the church or the living organism, the corporate life which derives from him and in which he continuously effects redemption by communicating to man his own sinless perfection, set a new course for many thinkers in the face of the current Rationalism, for which Jesus had become no more than an eminent teacher who had brought to men some cardinal religious truth and a pure morality, neither of which had any vital relationship to his own person.[51] By emphasizing a quality of experience, the realm of feeling or God-consciousness in man, Schleiermacher opened the way for attack upon Rationalism's emphasis on reason as the primary religious faculty. Neander's emphasis on the centrality of Christ and his interpretation of the history of the Church as the history of the divine life of Christ pervading humanity is built on Schleiermacher's work. Neander represents the new life of Christ, the second Adam, in its conflict with sin, in its adoption and rejection of worldly principles and forces in the various phases of rationalism and supernaturalism, scholasticism, mysticism, etc.

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[50] Quoted in Schaf-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religion, VII,95.

Nevin says that his reading of Neander gave a new form and sense to the first ages of the Church, and that for the first time he began to make sense of the old Christian fathers, to understand their inner spirit as it spoke through their own tongue rather than his own "Puritanic Presbyterian Tongue." The old Christian heresies ceased to be the freaks of brainless folly and he began to see both the meaning and method in their rise and progress, as well as their necessary connection with the growth of the Church.

> Not to be more particular, it was much to be put merely in the way of seeing what History properly means, under the view of an objective movement, determined by its forces toward its heaven appointed end--much to be brought to the feeling that there is a divinity even in profane history

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[51] H. R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (London, 1947), pp. 68-69.

> which shapes it everywhere to the service of a divine end; but still more, to feel this as true of the history of God's Holy Catholic Church. . . .[52]

Nevin says that the idea of the importance of historical element in all human existence was planted by Neander and subsequently became a conditioning factor in all his views of life. The idea did not become the full force for him through Neander's teaching, but he owed to Neander the dawning of the idea "of what history means for the life of the world everywhere, and most of all in the ruling, central sphere of religion."[53] This is to say that he began to see the Christian faith in terms of a living, growing movement in history, rather than in terms of a static doctrinal system to be believed.

Nevin says that during his years at Western he looked into the Oxford Tracts given him by a friend who found them dry and tiresome reading. His reading of the Tracts did not convert him to the views of the Tractarians, but he says he found in them his first glimpse of what the church spirit means. He became convinced of the deep, intelligent conviction at work among the Tractarians and of the profoundly earnest religious problem with which they were wrestling.

One concludes, therefore, that during his years at Western, Nevin stood within the prevailing Presbyterian orthodoxy in terms of Calvinism modified by Covenant Theology. This is evident in his Biblical Antiquities, in the sermons on election and the seal of the Spirit. He is disturbed, however, by the doctrinaire manner in which this theology expresses itself in the life of the churches. In the sermon on the doctrine of the Trinity and in the series titled "Faith" he sets against what he held to be the lifeless formalism of the system his own definition of religion as a life to be appropriated and lived, of faith as more than the assent of mind. Faith involves the deep region of feeling which enters into the living reality behind the symbols; it is more than the acceptance of a body of truth by mere reason or mere speculative understanding.

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[52] Quoted in Appel, p. 83.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Nevin stood also with the prevailing idea of revelation, the prevailing mode of Biblical interpretation, the understanding of the Church and its history, of the nature of doctrine, of Christology--all items on which he says he subsequently changed his mind. It is difficult, however, to trace any change in his thinking during his years at Western. He says that there were tendencies and influences during these years which were pushing him in a new direction. If one is to trust Nevin's recollections from the point of view of 1870 when he wrote "My Own Life," Nevin very early had a high estimate of the church and its sacramental care and nurture. The new direction his thinking was taking was evidently in the way of strengthening this estimate. The new direction

> had for its scope and aim--though more in the way of unconscious divination than in the way of clear and open reflection--the right adjustment of the objective and subjective side of Christianity, its supernatural substance and its natural form, in their relation to each other; and there belonged to it also an inward determination toward Christ, as

> offering in the constitution of his own person the proper solution for the problem. In other words, the course in which my religious life lay was of one order with that more decided Christological tendency which came to prevail more fully in later years; and to which alone, more fully than to any other cause, I owe whatever of peculiarity may seem to have attached itself to my theological views.[54]

A tentative assessment of the status of his thinking when he left Western might be that his introduction to the new theological spirit of Germany and his glimpse of the churchly spirit of the Oxford Tracts had planted seeds which were eventually to shake loose his roots in the Puritan tradition.

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[54] J. W. Nevin, "My Own Life: Historical Awakening," Reformed Church Messenger, Vol. MXXXVI (June 15, 1870).

CHAPTER II

AT MERCERSBURG, 1840-1843

During the latter part of 1839 several attempts had been made by the Board of Visitors of the German Reformed Seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, to find a professor of theology to succeed Dr. Lewis Mayer. Failing in this, a special convention of the Synod meeting at Chambersburg in January, 1840, unanimously elected the Reverend John Williamson Nevin of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Synod went out of the church to find a man, because no person of suitable qualifications could be found within the church who would accept the position. A committee was appointed by Synod to tender the unanimous call of that body to Nevin.

The series of articles by Nevin titled "Faith," originally published in the Presbyterian Review, began to appear in the Reformed Church Messenger, a weekly publication, the week following the notice of his election in the same paper for February 5, 1840. Shortly thereafter the committee crossed the Allegheny mountains in the cold of winter and pressed Nevin to accept the call to Mercersburg. In a letter to the president of the Synod dated March 5, 1840, he wrote that he had found much around and within him to make him resist the call--old ties, ecclesiastical and social; the idea of passing into new and untried church relations; the "new moral system, with which I must find myself surrounded on entering into the German communion. . . ."[1] Other factors--the unanimous and hearty call of the German Church, his familiarity with German manners and modes of thought during childhood and early youth, his attraction to German language and literature in recent years--conspired to make him feel called of God to go to Mercersburg. He was convinced, he said, that the German Church in America had a good future, being excelled by none other in the "resources of power" and the "intellectual ore" available for the purposes of religion.

> No church can boast a purer creed, or a better ecclesiastical framework. Her fathers rank high in the history of the Reformation. The spirit of a time hallowed faith (such as could once make martyrs), older than the Presbyterianism of Scotland, is still enshrined in her articles and forms. . . . I can go heartily and fully into such a church; and in this spirit I now accept the call of your Synod to the Professorship at Mercersburg.[2]

The Weekly Messenger of May 27, 1840, carried an account of Nevin's inauguration and of the projected publication of his inaugural address. The address was applauded for its delineation of the blessings of a faithful and well qualified ministry, for its grasp of the German interest in the United States, and the challenge facing the German Reformed Church. Nevin called upon the German churches to provide for the religious needs of the growing German population in the country within the framework of their own ecclesiastical institutions, and by means of their own exertion. He saw the Reformed churches of Scotland,

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[1] "Letter from Reverend Professor Nevin," The Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, V, No 26 (March 18, 1840), 931.

[2] Ibid.

Germany, France and Holland as so many twin sisters by birth not merely of the Protestant Reformation but of the Reformation in its purest form as it was perfected by Calvin. But he doubted that the English churches could break through the barriers of language and national temperament to meet the needs of the German population. He counselled his adopted brothers:

> The German Church must rise within herself, under God, by and from herself. She must adhere to her own standards. She must have her own ministry; and in order to do this, her own institutions for bringing her own sons forward to their sacred office. She should continue to cherish still her national sympathies and the hallowed associations of her own faith and worship. As Germans the best service they have it in their own power ordinarily to render to the cause of religion in this country, will be to abide in their own Church, and to do all that in them lies to assist it in putting on the full strength of the Lord.[3]

Nevin may have been attempting to allay the thought which some entertained, according to his biographer Theodore Appel, that Nevin would attempt to bring the German Church into the household of faith in which he had been born and educated.[4]

Two weeks after his inauguration Nevin reviewed a book by Frederick Augustus Rauch, then president of Marshall College also at Mercersburg, under the title Psychology. He had known Rauch briefly, he says, and had not been able to give his work the attention it deserved. Nevertheless, several aspects of the book aroused his interest. He notes that Rauch combines the best of German and Scottish schools in the area of mental philosophy. The groundwork of his system is Lockean in that he makes man's mind and soul to "rest ultimately on the sensuous life," that is, it is by means of the bodily senses only that the soul first sprouts and begins its development. But his work is essentially German in spirit since its philosophy is spiritual, rather than sensuous, and looks to the real rather than the phenomenal as the ultimate ground of man's life.[5] It has the feel of German transcendentalism, not in the objectionable sense that many apply this term to "all that does not fall in exactly with the philosophy of Locke (especially if it should show anything of a German complexion)," but in the sense that German speculation is reaching after an entirely new order in views with regard to the human soul.[6] He feels that by following Locke in grounding the genesis of the soul of man in the realm of the sensuous, Rauch escapes the mistakes of German thought, namely, of "mere speculation" or of running out into "sheer mysticism" or "pantheism."

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[3] J. W. Nevin, "The Christian Ministry," quoted in Appel, Theodore, The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication House, 1899), p. 114.

[4] Ibid.

He is much interested also in Rauch's view of mind "contemplated as a process of life, unfolding itself under its own laws on the gound of self-consciousness."[7] Self-consciousness, according to Rauch, distinguishes man from animals which have only self-feeling, and forms the ground of personality as distinguished from mere individuality; only with personality can there be reason, thought and will. From the ground and within the sphere of self-consciousness the soul arises and has its growth. And here, Nevin says, Rauch introduces a new method of observation. In contrast to the old metaphysicians who saw the mind as a multitude of faculties, and in contrast to a more recent school which views it as a single, identical activity, Rauch sees mind as one always and yet manifold at the same time.

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[5] J.W. Nevin, "Rauch's Psychology," a review in The Weekly Messenger, V, No. 38 (June 10, 1840), 977.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

> It develops itself through a succession of faculties, the higher still infolded in the lower, always becoming different as it expands and reaches toward heaven, and yet always continuing substantially the same. It finds its image in the life of the plant. As this unfolds itself organically in growth, always involving itself in new completeness, till it realizes its nature fully, in the end, as the blossom and the fruit; so in the case before us there is a regular development of spirit, from one form of life to another, till it effloresces at last, and becomes ripe in the highest activities of which it is capable.[8]

Nevin, whose training was grounded in the school which saw the mind as a multitude of faculties, was much attracted by this idea of the organic nature of the soul. The development of the soul begins with the senses, followed by attention and conception. Higher in the scale of importance are fancy, imagination and memory, while pure thinking in the form of understanding, judgment, reason and will constitute the summit of this development or "the ripe fruits" of Rauch's "Psychological Tree." Nevin says,

> This way of looking at the human soul is undoubtedly correct. It is however, as I have already intimated, new for this country. On this account, it must confer a special value on Dr. Rauch's treatise, as compared with other works in the English language. It goes far of itself to relieve the philosophy of mind from confusion, and sheds a grateful light on the path of the student, as he makes his way laboriously through its obscure depths.[9]

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[8] Ibid. [9] Ibid.

Nevin was much taken with the way in which Rauch held to the unity of body and soul in man. "The very body itself is (almost transcendentally), transfigured into a sort of spirit, by its living union with the soul."[10]

Several of these basic ideas--the concept of the organic development and unity of body and soul, rooted in the sensuous but ultimately grounded in the spiritual; the idea of self-consciousness as the seed-bed and distinguishing feature of personality--became important features of Nevin's later thought in the Mercersburg Theology.

At this point, in assessing the importance of Rauch's work, Nevin still stood within the ranks of Federal Theology in seeing mind as the focal point of the religious life.

> For is not the human mind the theatre on which the great truths of religion become real? Is not religion a Life, which has its seat in the mind, and which must be conditioned in the end in all its manifestations by the living nature, to which it belongs and through which it is revealed.[11]

That is, one's understanding of mind has a direct bearing on his understanding of the nature of religion and religious truth.

Beginning June 24, 1840, the Weekly Messenger ran a series of articles under the title "Worldly-Mindedness," in which Nevin further defines the nature of faith and the character of religion. Nevin sets the stage for his articles by quoting a New Testament passage of scripture which holds that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, for the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye, the pride of life is not

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[10] Ibid. [11] Ibid.

not of the Father, but is of the world. Here, he says, the apostle gives the criterion which separates those attached to the world, the realm of time and sense, from those whose lives are ultimately grounded in the sphere of the invisible and the eternal. Further this general exhortation, given without qualification or limitation, illustrates the way in which the Bible presents truth in terms of bold and sweeping propositions. It indicates that "a superhuman character" is impressed upon the Bible, which "proceeds upon a full view of what truth is, in its deepest ground and most universal form."

> The gospel speaks, not so much to the speculative reason of men (which after all is a superficial power) as to their spiritual sensibilities. These lie deep in the constitution of the soul. To be reached effectually, the truth must come before them in a form suited to their own nature. This requires more than what can be comprehended in naked logical propositions for the understanding. These can be used at best only as signs or symbols, into which the soul, when thus appealed to, shall put its own unutterable sense. Then it is, that forms of instruction in the Bible which might be wholly unsafe for strictly scholastic ends, become perfectly clear and sure for the inner sphere of religion. They are framed by divine wisdom, for the hidden organization of the spirit. It is by the light with which they are met from within, that they become intelligible and assert their proper power.[12]

Truth enters the mind via speculative reason, but it comes to life and meaning when it is apprehended by a deeper power of comprehension. Nevin locates this inner realm of comprehension in "the region of feeling in the soul."[13] However vague a general precept of the Bible may be to the naked understanding, "it finds a sure interpretation, sufficiently definite, in the light which is thrown upon it by the moral sense itself which it is designed and adapted to excite."[14] This moral sense is a part of man's native equipment, a vestige of his original nature which he kept after the fall. Nevin holds that the universal, generic character of the worldly mind is lack of faith which he defines in terms of the capacity of mind, when roused to action by the Holy Ghost, to communicate with the world of the invisible and the eternal.

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[12] J. W. Nevin, "Worldly Mindedness," Weekly Messenger, V, No. 41 (June 24, 1840), 990.

[13] Ibid.

> As through the medium of bodily senses, and on the ground of perceptions which they furnish, the mind communicates with the material world around it, so should it communicate, through the organ of faith, with the world invisible and eternal. Its apostacy, or fall, consists mainly in the submersion of the higher life in the lower . . .[15]

That is, after the fall man's nature was wholly submerged in the sphere of sense rather than in the sphere of the spirit where it rightfully belongs.

> Still the capacity for a divine life remains in the depths of the soul. The organ of spiritual vision has not been extinguished; it slumbers only in unconscious darkness, pressed down and held in fast imprisonment by the overwhelming weight of the flesh. And now it is the business of religion to reach, excite and raise, this slumbering energy (the "inward light" of the soul) that so the dissevered bond may be once more restored between man and his Maker, and the way opened for our life to expand with its true perfection in the heavenly state to which it of right belongs. Such resuscitation can take place only by the power of the Holy Ghost. Faith thus roused to action, is the gift of God. . . . Faith is the organ by which we reach and grasp the invisible.[16]

Thus awakened, man's moral sense responds to and grasps the truth of religion which comes to him from the Bible in the form of broad generalizations rather than in the form of logical propositions. The first evidence of worldly-mindedness is when "the direct apprehension of invisible realities on the part of the soul, as these belong to religion, is found to be dull and indistinct, as compared with its apprehension of the realities of sense belonging to the present world."[17] The real test of whether we are spiritually minded is "not what we know, but what we habitually feel."[18] One may have a full and strong theoretical conviction of the truth of the facts of religion, or he may accept them on the ground of tradition and authority, with no questions asked, and still not be spiritually-minded. The ultimate question is how real, tangible and impressive are the realities of the spiritual world to the interior life of faith.

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[14] Ibid. [15] Ibid., July 1, 1840, p. 994. [16] Ibid.

> . . . the thing needed is a direct contact on the part of the spirit with the realities themselves with which religion is concerned. Have they come to us with power? Do they stand out to our view, distinctly, vividly, like the facts that surrouhd us in the world of sense?[19]

A second evidence of worldly-mindedness is when "the authority of God, nakedly considered, is found to weigh less with us than motives to action presented from the world."[20] Nevin considered it axiomatic that God's law should be obeyed for its own sake, but he interprets God's law in terms which differ from Federal Theology. Obedience or conformity to God's law means basically to be devoted to his will as infinitely wise and good, to surrender one's soul freely and entirely to his direction. This view, he says, is different from the notion men commonly have of obedience when they think of the law objectively as "a form of authority, that is foreign from their own nature, and capable of being distinguished from it in the experience of life. . . ."[21] Such obedience does not embrace the whole of their life which may include interests not covered by the law. Among men generally it is a matter of negotiation as to how far the will of the creature shall give way to the authority of the Creator. Even where the individual accedes to the demands of religion, he ordinarily does it on the grounds of external reasons or motives, rather than from any inclination to do God's will for its own sake.

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[17] Ibid. [18] Ibid. [19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., July 15, 1840, p. 1001.

> It is a compromise rather than an inward surrendry. What is supposed to be obedience, is an effort of the soul to adjust itself to the divine law, under the notion of specific precepts and requisitions; not the power of a divine life, unfolding itself organically in and through the law itself, as its own element and sphere. And yet, it is only under this view that the will of God can be obeyed at all. We can have no religion possibly, any farther than we are disposed to merge our will in this higher authority, and are striving with free choice to be united to it, and swallowed up by it, in our whole spiritual development.[22]

The object of the gospel is to effect a revolution within the soul which will cause it to embrace the will of God as the true ground and form of its own existence.

> Faith, so far as it prevails, causes the idea of God to wake and live once more in the mind, and clothes with light and power the relations which bind the moral universe to this as its proper center. In Christ himself we find the true religious posture, as it has respect to the divine will, fully displayed. "I came down from heaven," we hear him saying,

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[21] Ibid. [22] Ibid.

> "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." His life had no object or meaning apart from this idea.[23]

So far as Christ's people have come under the power of the gospel, they have in this respect the mind which was in Christ himself; they "enter into the idea of his life, as a free inward evolution, falling in harmoniously with the will of God. . . ."[24]

The spiritually minded person, in contrast to the worldly minded, is anxious to understand the mind of God with regard to life in its particulars and details, to have his common secular movements ordered by God's will, and not simply those which look directly to another world. Through prayer for divine guidance, through instruction from the scriptures, through searching appeals to one's own conscience, one must ascertain the will of God in all things sacred and secular.

If a man obeys God's law from any motive than that it is God's law--because his character or profession requires it, or because he thinks it unsafe to neglect it

> . . . if considerations like these, instead of being used simply as vehicles to carry the understanding and the will back to the authority of God, are rested in as an independent and ultimate ground of obedience, a form or reason coordinate as it were with the divine oracle, and happily auxiliary to its claims; if a man thus serve God, and so far as this may be the character of his service, his religion must be considered spurious and false. He has not yet learned to obey God, as God. His obedience grounds itself finally in something different from the divine will. He walks after all in the flesh and not in the spirit.[25]

Nevin tried to maintain a proper balance between the claims of the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit. Man belongs to the world of time; his bodily nature is the medium of connection with it and has its ground in the outward material world. This fact gives rise to relationships, wants and interests which ultimately affect his very existence and rightfully challenge a large share of his thoughts. He belongs also to the world of the invisible and the eternal, the ultimate ground of his existence. This realm ought to hold first place in his thoughts. Being in no sense self-sufficient, being always upheld by a power outside himself, man cannot possibly achieve completeness except by leaving the circle of his own separate nature and appropriating and resting upon something it does not include. That which seems to man most adapted to fill the void in his nature becomes for him the chief good of life. The carnal mind tells him to turn away from the infinite and fill himself with the finite. The object of religion is to transfer the human spirit absolutely from the transient ground of time and sense to the more stable and enduring ground of things which are not seen and eternal.

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[23] Ibid. [24] Ibid. [25] Ibid., July 22, 1840, p. 1005.

> Hence it is that our salvation is made to involve the idea of a new life, different altogether, both in its principle and form, from the life which belongs to men naturally. It begins in regeneration, an extraordinary birth proceeding directly from the Spirit of God. It has its root and ground in the sphere of faith. . . . The old man with his fleshly life, falls away and dies more and more; and the power of a divine life, answerable to the life of heaven itself, wakes and works with more and more strength inwardly, forming all things as by the Spirit of the Lord into its own complexion.[26]

The soul attains through a process of moral death and resurrection the consciousness of a higher and better life in God. Man is then able to place the world of time and sense in proper perspective, as of secondary importance, using it for its proper ends, while the primary ground of his life is God in whom he finds the chief good of his life.

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[26] Ibid., August 5, 1840, p. 1014.

Whether the articles on "Worldly-Mindedness" were written after he moved to Mercersburg or while he was still at Western makes little difference, except for the influence of Rauch, for they are undoubtedly a sequel to the articles on "Faith." In each series he has grappled with the problem of faith and has rejected the concept of faith as belief in correct doctrine derived from religious truth given man in the Bible in the form of logical propositions for the understanding. He sees faith rather as the exercise of man's native moral capacity or sense, when roused to action by the Holy Spriit, in a way which enables it to penetrate to and apprehend the realities of the invisible and eternal world in a manner analogous to that with which man communicates with the physical world of time and sense through the bodily senses. The speculative reason is only the point of entry for religious truth; it is grasped as reality at a deeper level. This aspect of his thinking represents a considerable departure from Federal Theology particularly of the rationalistic school.

In several other respects Nevin has modified or reinterpreted Federal Theology. He sees the results of the fall as the transference of the central concern of man's life from the world of spiritual realities to the world of time and sense, with the attendant blunting of man's moral sense which now slumbers in the soul, rather than in terms of Federal Theology which interpreted the results of the fall as the transference of Adam's guilt to his posterity by the arbitrary fiat of God with the attending loss of the original knowledge of God's law and the capacity to obey it. He departs also from the attachment of Federal Theology to the "historico-grammatical school" of Biblical interpretation. He now sees the truth of the Bible in the form of bold sweeping generalizations which speak to the level of deep feeling in the soul. This area of feeling is the final court of appeals as to the sense of the Bible rather than the general laws of human language holding the Bible rigorously to the sense of its own language. Finally, Nevin emphasizes his view that the regenerate man is one whose life is filled with the power of a divine life, a real and inward union with the life of God in terms of the total will of God for life, as Christ was united to God in this view, rather than a reordering of the faculties simply in a way which makes it possible for one to accept and obey God's law. To anticipate, it is only a step from this concept of regeneration as a life union with God as seen in Christ, in terms of the total will of God for the total life, to Nevin's later concept in which he saw regeneration as a life union with Christ, the God-man.

It is difficult to pin down the influences which brought about these modifications, since Nevin seldom gives credit to any man for an idea or even the germ of an idea. He does indicate that he has been influenced by German thinking as this was reaching out for a new order of thought with regard to the soul, but he says no more than this. One has the feeling that his contact with and his reading of Rauch may have helped to precipitate and solidify ideas which had been developing through the years. The clue gotten from Rauch as to the organic growth and unity of body and soul, as these arise from roots in the material world and develop toward their ultimate ground in the realm of the spiritual world, affected his doctrine of the fall, of regeneration. One surmises that his reading of Scougal, Shaw, à Kempis[27] and perhaps others affected his concept of the nature of the Christian life and the character of Biblical truth. His definition of faith is quite clearly the crystallization of views which he held as early as 1832.[28] From that point on it appears to be his major concern to define and contrast his definition of faith in terms of feeling against that which defined it in terms of intellection.

The same issue of the Weekly Messenger which carried the account of Nevin's inauguration on May 20, 1840, contained an article reporting the meeting of the Maryland Classis at Clearspring, Maryland, beginning May 16 which proposed the holding of a Centenary Celebration in observance of the existence of the German Reformed Church in America for roughly one hundred years. It further proposed that the Centenary might take the direction of furthering the interests of the Theological Seminary at Mercersburg.[29]

The Weekly Messenger took up the proposal and suggested

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[1] See p. 32.

[2] See p. 19.

[3] Proceedings of the Maryland Classis, reported in the Weekly Messenger, V (May 27, 1840), 971.

three purposes which the Centenary might serve: (1) excite a deeper interest among local congregations, largely preoccupied with their own concerns, in the interests of the whole church; (2) give character and prominence to the Church among many who affected, if not labored under, an ignorance of the existence of the German Reformed Church; (3) awaken an interest in the benevolent claims of the Church, with a solicitation of monetary gifts in behalf of some specific object.[30]

Nevin threw his influence wholeheartedly behind these proposals, and further proposed that the Church raise $100,000 during the Centenary Year for the support of her benevolent institutions in general and the Theological Seminary and College at Mercersburg in particular. The German community, he maintained, needs an institution of higher learning where Germans might find a curriculum with a "real German character," and where the German language and literature could be studied.[31]

Nevin was never a man of few words, and he continued week after week through the medium of the Messenger to goad the Church into activity. So far as the pages of the Messenger are concerned, Nevin was for a time the strongest voice in urging the Centenary celebration on the Church.

During October 1840 Nevin travelled among the German Reformed churches of Eastern Pennsylvania. He reported that the idea of raising $100,000 was not considered as anything formidable among the churches there, and that he found among these churches a deep regard for the ancient doctrines and forms of the German Reformed Church and a wholesome disdain of "new notions" which threaten the Church. It occurred to him that the Centenary could be used to revive the proper life of the Church in the form of its original and distinctive character. The future of the Church, he said, depends on her holding to the past, not in a slavish manner, but in a spirit of manly, intelligent freedom. Her doctrines and forms had vitality enough with the churches of the Reformation; "let their original spirit be restored to them, and they are all that any church can require."[32] On this point he says that the opinion has prevailed to no small extent among other denominations, the Lutheran and the English Reformed in particular, that the general interests of religion in the country could best be served if the German Reformed Church were to fall to pieces; that it had lost its vitality by holding to dead forms, and that new forms or measures must be substituted for the old, by force if necessary, or else the people must be drawn off into other churches. Such arguments brought Nevin's blood to the boiling point.

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[30] "Centenary Celebration," an editorial in the Weekly Messenger, V (July 1, 1840), 994.

[31] "The Centenary, Again," a letter from J. W. Nevin to the Weekly Messenger, V (August 26, 1840), 1026.

By making the Reformed Church aware of her position as a branch of the Reformation Church, the Centenary could have the further salutary effect of helping to combat the danger to the

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[32] A letter from J. W. Nevin to the Weekly Messenger, VI (November 4, 1840), 1067.

Protestant Church and to American civil and political institutions from the Roman Catholic Church. In a review of "Lectures on Romanism" by J. F. Berg, pastor of the First German Reformed Church of Philadelphia, Nevin not only gave his assent to what Berg said about popery and its dangers, but he urged the Centenary as one means of combating it. Of Berg's book, he said,

> The topics handled are in themselves weighty points for the popish controversy. The manner in which they are managed is clear and open to the most common understanding. . . . Small as the volume is, it is large enough notwithstanding to drag some of the most hideous features of the Romish system into the broad light of day. In this way it is amply sufficient, were it generally read, to open the eyes of the ignorant, and to put the careless on guard against the dangers that threaten both Church and State from this quarter.[33]

At this point, Nevin was at one with Protestants generally in the country who were viewing with alarm the perils of Romanism to the religious, civil and political institutions of the nation.

The Synod of the German Reformed Church which met in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, beginning October 17, 1840, adopted a resolution which fixed the year 1841 for the Centenary, and called upon the Church to raise the amount of money proposed by Nevin. Nevin's pen was again employed to arouse support within the church, and he appealed to men of means outside the Church to contribute to the Centenary Fund in view of the fact that Marshall College belonged to the total community rather than to any one denomination, the German Reformed Church having undertaken to support it by way of special interest in it as a necessary sisterinstitution of the seminary.[34]

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[33] J. W. Nevin, "Berg on Romanism," a review in the Weekly Messenger, VI (November 25, 1840), 1079.

Some ministers were at a loss as to how they should approach the celebration by way of preaching. Nevin rose to the occasion.

> The entire past history of the Church, with all that is interesting and stirring in the age of the Reformation, lies open before you . . . for the purposes of instruction and edification. Or if you choose, you can dwell on the principles of its doctrines, and disciplines and forms. You can hold up the standard of the Catechism, and endeavor to rally the hearts of your congregation around it with understanding and zeal. Or you can take a survey of the extent of the Church, and its immense resources. You can show how much it might do for the glory of God, in comparison with what it is doing. You can speak of its relations to "those that are without," and of the great interests which are involved in it for the land at large. You can, in view of all this, insist at large on its duties and responsibilities, as they grow out of its resources and opportunities. Or you can speak of things that are to be feared; of losses to be sustained and of evils to be endured, of errors that may be expected to gain the ascendency, and of machinations, under the garb of religion, that threaten to subvert Church and State; all demanding vigorous and prompt action on our part; that they may be averted. You can hold up the claims of our institutions; the importance of a well educated ministry, the missionary ground we are called upon to occupy, the great necessity there is for charges to be divided. You can consider what is wanted immediately in the way of improvement, immediately in your own charge; and so labor to make the year an epoch, from which your people shall take a new start in all that pertains to godliness. With ground so broad before you . . . can there be any lack of suitable topics for Centenary preaching.[35]

Who could ask for more; a year of preaching outlined in one paragraph!

Meanwhile Nevin was engaged in the task of helping the Church to understand its history, doctrines, and its distinctive creed the Heidelberg Catechism. The December 9, 1840 issue of the Messenger carried the first of a series of twenty-nine articles by Nevin on the Catechism; the series ran almost two years with the final articles appearing in August 1842. The series ran so long because in the midst of Nevin's preparation of the articles, Dr. Rauch died throwing added work on Nevin who took over Rauch's classes in the College, his job of preaching in the College Chapel on Sundays, and the presidency of the College on a temporary basis.

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[34] A letter from J.W.Nevin to the Weekly Messenger, VI (December 8, 1840), 1087.

[35] J. W. Nevin, "Letter to a Minister," Weekly Messenger, VI (December 16, 1840), 1091.

Beginning as they did within six months after his having assumed the professorship at Mercersburg, the series on the Catechism undoubtedly served as an introduction of Nevin himself to the history and doctrinal standard of the German Reformed Church. The stated purpose of the articles was given by Nevin in a brief introduction. With the Centenary Year of the German Reformed Church at hand, he hoped he could give the Church a conviction that it had a history as old and as honorable as any protestant denomination, and a creed which embodied a spirit of its own worthy of being cherished and built upon.[36]

The first article advances the thesis which sets the tenor of the series, namely, that the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century comprehended churches in different countries, each having to a greater or lesser extent its own constitution and form, but looking upon themselves as forming a common interest, not negatively alone as separate from Lutheranism, but as positively one in their general spirit.

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[36] J. W. Nevin, "The Heidelberg Catechism," Weekly Messenger, VI (December 9, 1840), 1085.

Nevin holds that while the history of the Reformed Church begins with the work of Zuingli, he is not to be considered the founder of the Reformed Church. He merely led the way in the series of events out of which the Reformed movement gradually developed. Calvin in particular merits a large share of credit for the giving character to the movement which grew in several countries and was influenced by the genius of each.

> We have therefore no Zuinglian or Calvinistic church, as such; but in different countries the body of the Reformed is known under different denominational titles, which in a number of cases involve no material difference of character, but on the other hand are often found to turn on the most diverse view and forms.[37]

The Synod of Dort, 1618, Nevin notes, found the Heidelberg Catechism to be an exposition of the faith of the Reformed Church generally and raised it to the status of a symbolical book for the Church at large.

Nevin held that the groundwork of the Catechism is Calvinistic with certain features toned down so as to make it acceptable to those Reformed groups which held to a form of Calvinism which softened its harsher aspects. For example, the Reformed churches held the doctrine of predestination in the modified "sublapsarian view" rather than in the "supralapsarian view" in which Calvin held it. Some groups leaned in the direction of the Lutheran Church which minimized the idea.[38]

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Nevin says that Luther and Melancthon both held to the doctrine of Predestination in the beginning in the same form as Calvin held it. Melancthon later renounced the doctrine. Luther grew skeptical about it and did not insist on it in his preaching and writing.

For this reason the Catechism is largely silent on the question since its intent is to present the Reformed faith in the broadest and most general outline. Nevertheless,

> The system is substantially Calvinistic, as the Reformed Church before the Synod of Dort were all substantially of this character, notwithstanding the material deviations which were tolerated among them from the rigid form in which the doctrine of Predestination was held by Calvin himself. . . . There might be free and safe communion, it was supposed, in the spirit of the Reformation and in the spirit of the Gospel without so contracting the platform of faith as to touch the article of Predestination at all.[39]

On this point, however, the Reformed faith was definitely Calvinistic since neither Zuingli nor the Swiss churches generally before Calvin held to the doctrine of predestination.[40]

Nor did the Catechism directly assert the doctrine of Unconditional Election for the reason that it was not received universally by the Reformed Church in its extreme form. The Catechism represents the redemption wrought by Christ as something universal and more than adequate for the needs of the race, "but the election of grace is represented throughout to be its ground and fountain, by the measure of which the entire work, from its commencement to its close, must necessarily be ruled and defined."[41]

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[39] J. W. Nevin, Weekly Messenger, VII (May 4, 1842), 1377.

[40] Nevin says that for Calvin predestination is "a divine decree settling unchangeably from all eternity, the character and destiny of every human being" (ibid.). Calvin's theory is technically titled "supralapsarian," that is, contemplates men as creatures simply, before their fallen state. The decree itself established the fall as the necessary medium of implementing preordination to life or death. Predestination is absolute, having no dependence on any condition or event. Grace is invincible in the case of the elect, and the atonement affects them exclusively. Redemption is particular, not general. In the "sublapsarian" view, the fall is foreseen, and redemption was conceived for the benefit of the elect. The doctrine was further modified by divorcing it from the notion of a particular redemption. The decree of redemption was made to precede the decree of election, God first purposing to provide an atonement for the world and then electing a certain portion of mankind to salvation on this ground. In this way, says Nevin, an attempt was made to hold to the idea of a general or universal redemption as the only ground on which a free offer of grace could be made to all.

On the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the Catechism is Calvinistic rather than Zuinglian. For Zuingli, the sphere of religion was the understanding. The forms of religion had to be such as could be intellectually discerned and embraced. Zuingli's rationalism was in contrast to Luther's mysticism, and both positions were partial and onesided. Zuingli insisted that when Christ said "This is my body" he meant this signifies my body. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be observed in remembrance of Christ; on the part of the worshipper it was a witness before the congregation of faith in Christ's death. Luther insisted on a literal interpretation of Christ's words; Christ is really present in the sacrament and is received along with the elements by the communicant.[42]

Nevin holds that the view adopted by the majority of the Reformed was that of Calvin. Before Calvin the Swiss were led to attach a deeper meaning to the Lord's Supper than Zuingli had given it, having persuaded themselves that he meant in fact as much as they were disposed now to make him mean. That is, the views of Zuingli and Luther, "notwithstanding their antagonism had silently wrought upon one another in the way of attraction also and mutual modification."[43] In this way, the Swiss were prepared for Calvin's view of the sacrament which differed considerably from Zuingli in its approximation to the view of Luther. For Calvin the Lord's Supper was more than a remembrance, or a representation, or a sign of the worshipper's profession of subjectivity to the gospel of Christ. It is all this, but,

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[41] Nevin, Weekly Messenger, VII (May 18, 1842), 1385.

[42] Ibid., VI (January 27, 1841), 1013.

> Rightly used, he held that it has the effect of incorporating us with the real person of Christ, and so making good to us in fact the blessedness it exhibits to our faith. . . . In the Lord's Supper then, an actual union is realized on the part of the believer with the life of the Saviour's glorified body; involving a communion with him in his whole nature, as real as the bond which identifies us, in virtue of our natural birth, with the general nature, soul and body, of our first father Adam.[44]

Calvin agreed with Luther, Nevin contends, except for the fact that he rejected Luther's contention that the glorified body of Christ is actually joined to the earthly elements, and that every communicant, with or without faith, receives it into himself. Calvin held that Christ's body remains in heaven, and that by faith only, exercised with the use of the elements, our souls ascend to Him and reach that communion with his nature which it is the object of the eucharist to effect.

> Through the outward ordinance, faith has efficacy to incorporate us with the sphere of the Saviour's life, so that our persons become transfused vitally with the very same power, that animates his own person in the world of glory. All this lies beyond the measure of human thought; is transcendental for the speculative understanding, to which everything must be a "hard saying" that cannot be comprehended in forms of time and space.[45]

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[43] Ibid., VII (April 27, 1842) 1373.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

So spake Calvin! The Lord's Supper involves a mystery too high for the understanding, and beyond exhibition in words. One feels, here, rather than understands.

Calvin's doctrine established itself with predominant authority in the Reformed Church in Switzerland, and one meets it in the formularies of faith in the countries where the Reformed system existed. It is the view of the Lord's Supper presented in the Heidelberg Catechism. Unfortunately, Nevin opines, the Zuinglian or rationalistic view has come now to prevail in the Reformed churches in opposition both to the Lutheran and the Calvinistic doctrines of the sixteenth century.

By way of ventilating his own feelings about the nature and importance of the Lord's Supper, Nevin says that it involves a mystery which the speculative understanding can never fathom. It actualizes the central idea of all religion, the life of God in the soul of man, to the apprehension of faith in a single institution divinely appointed for this very purpose. The word of Christ that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood abide in him and He in them (John vi. 53-58) is made actual in the sacramental fact. The eucharist is the very heart of any theology, therefore, determining its whole form and complexion.[46] This becomes a basic presupposition of his theology.

Nevin concluded the series by noting the close relationship which had existed from the beginning in America between the Dutch and German Reformed churches in America and their theological affinity in view of their common allegiance to the Heidelberg

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[46] *Ibid.*, January 27, 1841, p. 1013.

Catechism. He lauded the movement then on foot to bring them into closer ecclesiastical connection as one means of keeping alive the spirit of the Reformation, and of counteracting the tendency toward division and disunion among the churches. It is ironic that Nevin who became an ardent advocate of the unity of the Church, should have become, after the emergence of the Mercersburg Theology, the focal point of a controversy which defeated the attempt to bring these two branches of the Reformed Church together.

He further catalogued what he considered to be the "spiritual desolation" of the German Church in terms of frozen formality, dearth of real spiritual life and vigorous church discipline, niggardliness in support of the Church. The whole Church, he noted, taxing her energies in the Centenary celebration, stretched over a period of five years, had not been able to raise as much money as "a single miserable foreign female dancer has drawn into her hands in less time by simply pandering to public sensuality."[47] He hoped the German Church could rise out of her spiritual sloth, but he warned that she could not do so by deserting the genius of her own original life and resorting to the quackery and pyrotechnics of the revival system.

> It comes simply to this. Shall the vigorous and wholesome doctrines of the Heidelberg Catechism, as they have been held by the Reformed churches in general from the beginning, abide in honor and have practical force, over the broad, rich, central territory that stretches from the Delaware to the Potomac; or shall it be given up absolutely, so far as the reigning mass of its population is concerned, to the dominion of Arminianism?[48]

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[47] Ibid., August 24, 1842, p. 1441. [48] Ibid.

The effort of the church must not be to break away from the past, but to restore the consciousness and full power of her own distinctive life.

> Happy will it be for her, if she show herself true to her own calling, and seek to become strong by the force of an inward life, rising with natural and steady development from its constitutional ground. If she is destined to excel at all, it can only be by inscribing on her banner, Order, knowledge, and sound doctrine. If she is to strike her roots deep into the earth, and fling her branches far and wide toward heaven, it will be only by aspiring to be known and felt, under her birthright title as the Church of the Heidelberg Catechism.[49]

The series on the Catechism was well received generally by the Church except for a voice or two raised in defense of Zuingli as being the founder of the Reformed branch of the Church. The Weekly Messenger ran a series of articles which included portions of the Catechism with commentary thereon designed, as the editor explained, "principally for children and youth engaged in the study of this excellent system of divine truth." The printing establishment published an edition of the Catechism, constitution, and discipline of the Church. Nevin's effort to raise the spiritual tone of the church began to bear fruit as evidenced, for example, by the report of a committee of the Mercersburg Classis which noted the increase in prayer meetings and family altars, increased attendance at preaching services, and the fact that "in all those churches where God's spirit has been poured out, the Catechism of our Church, has been the instrument used by the Great Head of the Church for the awakening of our souls and the upbuilding of the Lord's people."[50]

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[49] Ibid., p. 1442.

[50] "Report on the State of Religion of the Mercersburg Classis," Weekly Messenger, VII (June 7, 1843), 1607.

The German Reformed Church during this period, 1840-1843, was becoming increasingly involved in the revivals of the period. The pages of the Weekly Messenger carried stories of revivals or "protracted meetings," as they were usually referred to, all over the church. Reports of widespread revivals during the winter of 1843 indicated that they were something new for the churches involved and that they were conducted in an atmosphere of order and dignity. Converts were being received into the church after due instruction in the Catechism. The church at Reading, Pennsylvania, reported for the encouragement of other pastors that the revival there "first manifested itself in the Catechetical Class, from whence its influence spread over the entire congregation, and indeed over the whole town."[51] The minister at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, gave large credit for his success to the doctrines of the Heidelberg Catechism brought to bear upon the heart and life in a protracted meeting which had been prepared for by a long series of prayer meetings, and by a systematic visitation of families, by the Consistory, urging them to attend the projected meetings. This visitation was referred to by the pastor of the church as a "new measure" about which there had been some qualms, at the beginning, but which had proved eminently successful.[52]

The editor of the Messenger noted that there were some cases of revivals in "what are technically termed new measures" had been employed. He felt, however, that the brethren generally had "learned the distinction between extra measures of grace and unscriptural measures," and those who a few years ago were so fearful of "new measures" that they would employ "no measures" to bring sinners to repentance, had seen the light and were now engaged in serious efforts to reach them through protracted meetings.[53] He had no objection to protracted meetings, inquiry meetings and prayer meetings properly conducted, but he did object strenuously to noise and confusion in preaching services and prayer meetings. As to the use of the anxious seat, he cautioned that in the excitement of the moment matters might be carried beyond the purpose of bringing to view the sincerely anxious, and in the face of such a possibility its use might well be dispensed with. If it were used at all, the utmost care must be taken to make clear to the penitent sinner the purpose for which it is being used.

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[51] "Revivals of Religion," Weekly Messenger, VIII (February 15, 1843), 1543.

[52] "Revival in Chambersburg, Pa.," Weekly Messenger, VIII (January 11, 1943), 1523.

During the winter of 1843 the church at Reading had been in a state of almost continuous revival with upwards of three hundred hopeful conversions, ninety-five additions to the membership, and the number of applicants for membership increasing daily. Nevin paid a visit to Reading late in the spring of 1843 to observe for himself the actual state of things. He found the church holding prayer meetings in the German and English language with large attendance at each service. He ascertained the fact that the awakening had been without disorder, confusion or "Methodistical extravagance"; that despite the fact that feeling had been deep and difficult to control, it had been controlled. The work had been advanced without resort to "the blind mummery of new measures."[54] The awakening at Reading had not been without controversy. In that section of the country, says Nevin, it had been fashionable to brand serious religion as fanaticism, and to count it a mark of weakness and superstition to speak of the new birth, the necessity of a change of heart, or of communion with God. Family worship and prayer meetings were opposed as "strablerism."[55] These interests of evangelical piety have been vindicated by the Reading awakening, he maintained, as belonging to the "true, original spirit of the German Reformed Church." New measures--the anxious bench, shouting, clapping, the babel of false excitement--are one thing; the serious use of old measures is another. Thus did he give qualified approval to the revival at Reading.

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[53] "Revivals of Religion," Weekly Messenger, VIII (March 22, 1843), 1562.

Nevin noted that the awakening at Reading had another important result, namely, the establishment of regular English services in the Reformed Church. He felt that the English service should have been introduced at least ten years earlier. This would have saved the loss of many members to the English churches, Presbyterian and Episcopalian, without impairing the distinctive character of the church the least bit.

> The object should have been to build up an English congregation in connection with the German Reformed Church. The in-

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[54] J. W. Nevin, "Visit to Reading," Weekly Messenger, VIII (June 14, 1843), 1612.

[55] Ibid.

> terest would have been in all essential respects the same, only Presbyterianism from Germany instead of Presbyterianism from Scotland. . . . Were the Presbyterian Church in Reading a German Reformed Church, without a particle of change in its condition more than might be involved in the use of the Heidelberg Catechism as a symbolical book instead of the Westminster Confession, its weight in favor of evangelical religion would be ten times greater in Berks County than it is at present.[56]

The German Reformed Church must retain its identity in order to be of maximum usefulness in the heart of a German population.

Several facets of Nevin's thinking become apparent as one reviews his writings of this period of his life. First, he maintained that the churches which came out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, those generally understood as the churches of the right wing of the Reformation--the Lutheran churches and those of the Reformed tradition--had a life and spirit of their own which were basic to the Protestant understanding of the Christian faith. These churches could best fulfill their destiny by keeping this faith and spirit alive. So far as the Reformed churches were concerned their distinctive life and spirit, their distinctive creed and forms, were based on the theology of Calvin. The future of these churches depends on their fidelity to this faith. Second, the German Reformed Church had also its distinctive forms of action and of propagating the faith, namely, sound churchmanship, family worship, the education of its constituency in the Christian faith in terms of the understanding of the Heidelberg Catechism. These forms of action are also in the tradition of right-wing evangelical Protestantism. Third, the actual state of the churches in the United States was tending to the disruption and alteration of the distinctive character and faith of the right-wing churches. The revival system had invaded them, tending not only to negate their proper spirit and life but to produce disunion and division. The whole situation precipitated a crisis for Protestantism, and an unpleasant and foreboding prospect for the right-wing churches in general, and so far as he was concerned, to the Reformed churches in particular.

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[56] Ibid.

To add to the crisis, the country was faced with the threat of Roman Catholicism. He saw the next fifteen years as being crucial in the contest between popery and Protestantism, particularly in the matter of reaching the million to a million and a half German emigrants now settled here, with still more coming in increasing numbers each year. Popery, well supported and administered from Europe, could very well raise itself by degrees to numerical strength and power. In such a situation it could hope to find support from politicians who were "ready if need be to sell Christ himself as well as Constitution and Country in order to ride into power by its means."[57] Such a catastrophe would mean the subversion of law and order to the extent that "even wise and well meaning men" might turn to popery as "the only power that could effectually rule and restrain the wild tumultuating confusion . . . as the only alternative to anarchy without help and without end."[58]

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[57] J.W. Nevin, "American Protestant Association," Weekly Messenger, VIII (April 26, 1843), 1581.

[58] Ibid.

> The truth is, we are already in this country, whether we consider it or not, in the midst of one of the greatest moral struggles the world has ever beheld. The point to be settled is, Shall Christ or antiChrist reign on the shores of the new world? The battle is vast, for in the end, the new world may embrace in its bosom a population, equal to that of the whole globe besides . . . it involves questions of vital revolutionary interest for all nations, kindred and tongues. . . . It is emphatically a world crisis.[59]

He was convinced that a revival of the Protestant Reformation faith in the right-wing tradition was the only hope for combatting both popery and sectarianism.

These convictions were the soil out of which an important production of this period grew, the tract *Anxious Bench.* Two incidents were the immediate occasion for the production of the *Anxious Bench*. Nevin had recommended the Reverend William Ramsey of Philadelphia, a man he had known at Princeton, to the German Reformed Church at Mercersburg as a candidate for the vacancy in its pastorate. Ramsey made a favorable impression on the congregation and received a call to the pastorate. Nevin, however, deplored Ramsey's use of the anxious seat in a Sunday evening service at Mercersburg. He informed him that he would be glad to see him accept the call to Mercersburg, but that if he were to come and if he expected cooperation from him, he would have to dispense with New Measures and adhere to the catechetical system. Ramsey was greatly offended and declined the call. The church itself was greatly disturbed by the turn of events, but Nevin's will prevailed. Nevin then delivered a series of lectures in the seminary on New Measures out of which the tract Anxious Bench came.[60]

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[59] *Ibid*. See also J. W. Nevin, "German Emigrant Interest," *Weekly Messenger*, VIII (May 31, 1843), 1602.

A second incident came out of his criticism of the Winebrennerian movement. In the articles on the Heidelberg Catechism Nevin had devoted some space to an enumeration of the difficulties the German Reformed Church had faced during the last fifty years, among them being the inroads made in the German territory by "ranting and fanatical sects of different names." Of special concern to Nevin were two groups which had broken away from the German Reformed Church and had acquired a considerable membership made up in great part of Germans, though not all gathered from the Reformed connection. One of these groups was the United Brethren in Christ founded in 1789 by Otterbein, a former minister in the German Reformed Church, whom Nevin characterizes as "a good man, who seems to have been driven into a false position, by the cold, dead temper which he found generally prevalent in the regular church."[61] The other group was that started by Winebrenner in 1829, who, Nevin said,

> . . . has had dexterity enough to put in motion a similar ball, which continues rolling to this hour, not without abundance of sound. This latter sect especially glory in being patrons of ignorance, rail at hireling ministers, encourage all sorts of fanatical, unscriptural disorders in their worship, and institute their own fancies and feelings for the calm deep power of faith. In doctrine both (Otterbein and Winebrenner) are of course pelagianistic.[62]

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[60] Appel, pp. 157-61.

[61] J. W. Nevin, "The Heidelberg Catechism," Weekly Messenger, VII (August 10, 1842), 1434.

[62] Ibid.

The Winebrenner movement embodied everything that threatened the faith and spirit of the right-wing churches.

Winebrenner, of course, protested that Nevin had misrepresented the character of his church. He justified his having left the church on the basis of the same complaint Nevin himself had often voiced, that it had been devoid of "true serious piety"; he accused the Reformed Church and its ministry of being "of the catechism" rather than "of the Bible," whereas his church, the Church of God, stood "on the plan and pattern as shown us in the New Testament"; and he defended emotional extravagances on the ground that they were not forbidden by Scriptures or else that they were justified by similar phenomenon in the Scriptures.[63] Nevin had sharply criticized Winebrenner's use of the anxious seat and the delusion of the sinner's "getting through" to God in the midst of the noise and confusion attending its use. Winebrenner turned the same criticism of delusion against the Reformed men who "labor for and aim at nothing more than to get the young people 'through' a course of catechetical instruction and the unscriptural rite of confirmation."[64]

At Nevin's request Winebrenner's remonstrance was published in the Messenger in order that his side of the question might be fairly represented. Nevin noted that he felt it best to publish it without comment even though it furnished a fair opportunity for handling the merits of the New Measure's scheme of religion. Winebrenner was not satisfied with this gesture and continued to goad Nevin, who finally announced that he had prepared a tract under the title of Anxious Bench which would soon appear and would expose the spirit of the New Measure system, so different in character from "the simplicity, godly sincerity and straight-forward honesty of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."[65] The pamphlet went on sale during the first week of October, 1843.

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[63] "Winebrenner's Vindication," Weekly Messenger, VIII (July 12, 1843), 1627.

[64] Ibid.

In the tract Nevin set out to undermine the whole system of New Measure Revivals. The focus of his attack was on the use of the Anxious Bench which he said was the least offensive of the techniques or measures employed in the system, but was the symbolic or representative measure of the entire system. He felt that if he could show this measure to be unworthy of confidence, the whole system would be shorn of its title to respect, since, "if any part of the system could claim indulgence it would be the Anxious Bench. All beyond this is only something worse."[66]

Nevin noted that the German Reformed Church, to some extent, and the Lutheran Church, to a greater extent, had opened their doors to New Measures as a way of competing with the "upstart sects" who were trying to take over their fields, or were employing New Measures as a way of forcing a reformation in the regular churches on the ground that the old organizations were corrupt or had succumbed to a dead formality. Nevin was aware of the dead formality in the life of the German Reformed Church, and he had been working mightily in his own way to revive in it a deep spiritual life on the ground of its own distinctive forms and doctrines as they came from the Reformation. He was convinced that New Measure revivalism was not the answer to its problem.

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[65] J. W. Nevin, "Winebrenner Again," Weekly Messenger, VIII (September 13, 1843), 1664.

[66] J. W. Nevin, "The Anxious Bench" in Miscellaneous, p. 5.

Nevin therefore set himself to the task of tearing down any confidence the church might have in New Measures by a concentrated analysis of the errors involved in the use of the Anxious Bench or anxious seat. Said Nevin, ". . . let this system prevail and rule with permanent sway . . . and the old regular organizations, if they continue at all, will not be the same churches."[67]

The use of the Anxious Bench, he asserted, requires no spirituality. It encourages "quackery," because it relies on outward effect rather than upon inward power. It is a refuge for weak, ignorant and slothful ministers, since it encourages them to depend on sporadic and exciting measures to do the work of a consistent and diligent year round pastoral ministry.

As to the end it seeks to serve, namely, the conversion of souls, the Anxious Bench is productive of false results. It creates a false issue for the conscience of the sinner. The call to come to the Anxious Bench diverts the individual from the primary question of whether he will come to Christ. The excitement involved in reaching a decision to go to the Anxious Bench destroys any genuine religious feelings the sinner may have, and distracts him from the quiet reflection which permits the action of truth in the mind. The decision is for the Anxious Bench and not for Christ. The sinner's feelings become a trap for his judgment, and when feelings have died down, the inevitable result is disillusionment and "falling away": The Spirit of the Anxious Bench tends to disorder and fanaticism which cannot be held in check, are unscriptural, and an affront to Christian sobriety, as the spectacle of women praying in public.

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[67] Ibid., p. 55.

The instruction required by an awakened sinner cannot be given in a few minutes and in such general terms as the number of people at the Anxious Bench and the noise and excitement of the spectacle make possible. Further, those for whom the church should pray and to whom counsel needs be given can be discovered and dealt with apart from the use of the Anxious Bench where penitent sinners are "theatrically paraded to produce effect."[68] True religious feeling is inward and deep. It shrinks from outward show. It spurns rude familiarity with God and exhibits deep, intelligent piety. The Anxious Bench produces the exact opposite.

It is no accident that these defects exist in the system of the Anxious Bench, for it is based on a "false theory of religion." In the tract Nevin does not enlarge on this accusation, but goes on to say that it stands in the way of "those deeper forms of action" by which alone it is possible to build up

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[68] Ibid., p. 45.

Christiantiy in a sure and firm way. On this point, he maintained,

> A ministry apt to teach; sermons full of unction and light; faithful, systematic instruction; zeal for the interests of holiness; pastoral visitation; catechetical training; due attention to order and discipline; patient perseverance in the details of the ministerial work; these are the agencies by which alone the kingdom of God may be expected to go steadily forward among any people.[69]

Nevin characterized these forms of action "the system of the Catechism." Where this system is fully and faithfully used there will be revivals. He seems anxious to avoid the impression that he was opposed to revivals per se. He approved of them, he says, when they arise out of and are the "natural fruit of the general culture going before, without that spasmodic, meteoric character" of New Measure revivals.[70] Revivals should be an integral part and normal result of the life of religion at work in the church. The system of the Catechism, not as a mere dead form, but as used by men who are inwardly, spiritually powerful is the only system that will insure a "Christianity of the Church . . . large, deep, full, vigorous and free. . . ."[71] No man can combine the system of the Anxious Bench and the system of the Catechism. The two are mutually exclusive.

Nevin warned that neither the popularity nor seeming success of the Anxious Bench system signifies that God approves it, or that it is worthy of continued use. It is true that God has used for good ends some movements in the name of and under the form of religion--for example, Stylitism, Romanism and Millerism--which came from beneath and not from above. Their general operation, however, as with the Anxious Bench, is intrinsically and permanently bad. Typical of the bad side of New Measures is the way it is made to include things of a different character altogether as, for example, the temperance cause, prayer meetings, the operations of religious benevolence generally. This mixing of legitimate and illegitimate interests has wronged sound evangelical religion from two sides. On the one hand, these interests which are radically distinct from New Measures have been opposed by some as belonging to the general system of fanaticism connected with New Measures. On the other hand, the Anxious Bench has been zealously defended by some as though the cause of evangelical religion generally depended on its success. In this way, false religion has been promoted at the expense of sound evangelical religion.

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 55. [70] *Ibid.* [71] *Ibid.*

Nevin agreed that forms and measures are needed in the church, but he held that they can have no value unless they are the outward expression of the spirit within. The Anxious Bench, relying as it does, on outward effect rather than on inner power, is a badge of spiritual sloth and poverty.

Reaction to the tract came quickly. The Presbyterian, the Christian Intelligencer, the Lutheran Standard variously praised it for the manner in which it "has in a thorough, sober and forcible manner exposed the new measure system of revivals, of which the anxious bench forms such a conspicuous part"; for "its thoroughly evangelical views"; its timeliness, etc.[72]

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[72] Quoted in "Anxious Bench," an editorial in the Weekly Messenger, IX (November 1, 1843), 1694.

The first reaction from the German Reformed Church commended Nevin's denunciation of New Measures revivalism, but voiced the fear that Nevin has not defined his position as fully and clearly as could be desired. There would be those, it was suggested, "who will accuse the Doctor of one-sidedness in his views, of being opposed to anything like extraordinary movements of the work of God, of being indisposed to direct the anxious and inquiring sinner--that he is an unconverted man himself, in short, of being unfriendly to Revivals of Religion."[73] This criticism did come from within and from without the Reformed Church. From within the church Nevin was attacked chiefly by Jacob Helfenstein who claimed that few of the techniques of New Measures were actually new, and that even if they were, the church ought to use any measure which, by the criterion of success in terms of saving the souls of men, appeared to bear the stamp of approval of God, "provided they are in accordance with the spirit of the Bible and the dictates of common sense."[74] Criticism of Nevin was generally in this vein. The editor of the Lutheran Observer, Benjamin Kurtz, concluded that Nevin was opposed to "protracted meetings, prayer meetings, revivals, etc."[75] Several German Reformed brethren came to Nevin's defense, saying that he had been strangely misapprehended and shamefully misrepresented by his critics. Some agreed with Nevin's wholesale denunciation of New Measures; a few would use the anxious seat judiciously as a supplementary measure to the use of the system of the Catechism. His defenders maintained that Nevin did not oppose protracted meetings, prayer meetings or revivals; that he opposed only the use of the anxious seat and the irregularities accompanying its use.

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[73] Clericus, "The Anxious Bench," Weekly Messenger, IX (November 22, 1843), 1707.

[74] J. H., "The Anxious Bench," Weekly Messenger, IX (December 6, 1843), 1713.

[75] "New Measures," an editorial in Weekly Messenger, IX (December 12, 1843), 1719.

The January, 1844, issue of the Biblical Repertory noted its hearty concurrence in the main argument of Nevin's tract, lauded him for saying so forcibly and seasonably what others had not said out of delicacy in regard to the feelings of pious brethren, and declared that "the 'Anxious Bench,' as it is barbarously called, after having been by false zeal erected into a third sacrament, has gradually worked out its proper results, and in most of our churches has fallen into discredit."[76] This hearty approval came from Nevin's alma mater Princeton. At the same time, the Christliche Botschafter, a German paper published by the "Evangelische Gemeinschaft," a small German sect commonly called "Albrights" or "German Methodists," said Nevin's tract was twenty or thirty years behind the times, and that it subverted a system founded on God's word and on experience.[77]

Nevin held his peace until the last week in January, 1844, while the arguments for and against the Anxious Bench piled up. He had been taken to task, he says, in six replies from various quarters--Methodist, United Brethren, New School Presbyterian, Lutheran--and by a brother of his own denomination, Jacob Helfenstein. He suspected there would be more critical statements forthcoming. Finally he produced a series of six articles which appeared in the Messenger on the subject of the tract, for the purpose, he said, not so much of answering his critics as "for the purpose of explaining himself a little more fully to those who have a right to ask for such explanation."[78] He returned to his theme that the German churches, Reformed and Lutheran, had a genius and spirit of their own, and that if they were to rise at all in America as a religious interest, they ought to rise in the type of their original life. The system of the Anxious Bench also has a spirit and genius.

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[76] Quoted in "The Anxious Bench," an editorial in the Weekly Messenger, IX (January 17, 1844), 1739.

[77] Ibid.

> No matter what may be its pretensions to spirituality and zeal, it labors under the general disease, that has been found to characterize all forms of will worship, since Paul wrote his epistle to the Colossians down to the present hour. In its inmost core, it belongs to the great Pelagian heresy; and, whenever it is permitted to have free course, the poison of this heresy is sure to disclose itself, in due time, under one form or another. Fanatical excesses follow naturally in its train.[79]

This fact makes the question of New Meausres the most important which the Lutheran and Reformed churches have to face.

> Their very existence depends upon it; if existence be taken to mean anything deeper than a name. Let the system of the Bench prevail, in opposition to the system of the Catechism (for most assuredly they can never flourish both together) and the true distinctive spirit of these churches, will be to the same extent undermined and destroyed. The system involves a life which does not belong to the Augsburg Confession or the

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[78] J. W. Nevin, "The Anxious Bench," Weekly Messenger, IX (January 24, 1844), 1742.

[79] Ibid., January 31, 1844, p. 1746.

> Heidelberg Catechism; a life that is equally foreign from the constitution of both Churches, as organized and established amid the storms of the sixteenth century.[80]

The whole Christianity of the country has an interest, therefore, not simply in the moral resurrection of the old German churches but in the form under which that resurrection takes place. It will require no more zeal on their part to rise under the legitimate banner of the Reformation enshrined in their symbolical books, than to rise by the false system of the Bench. If they are to rise under the genius of Methodism, he said, it were better to become Methodists altogether and to abandon their names, rather than to stand as a monumental remembrance of a glory once theirs but no longer.

> If we want to be Methodists, let us be Wesleyan Methodists at once; not Lutheran Methodists, not German Reformed Methodists; not conducted to the Lord's table by the process of the catechism in the morning and dragged to the Bench for conversion in the evening. We cannot bind these opposite systems into a harmonious whole. We cannot be true to the Bench, and faithful to the Catechism at the same time.[81]

Nevin took to task those who held that because the German churches were in a period of crisis, trying to rise out of their lethargy, and because the New Measure system had shown its head to some extent in these churches and had become "intertwined with the idea of prayer meetings, protracted meetings and all special efforts in favor of religion," to strike at New Measures would be to strike at these legitimate interests, especially revivals, at the same time.[82] Nevin agreed that this confusion existed, but he stoutly argued that the future welfare of the German churches, especially in a situation where they are beginning to make forward strides, depends upon their now being able to distinguish between things which are different and which neither stand nor fall together.

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[80] Ibid. [81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., February 14, 1844, p. 1753.

> What greater calamity could fall upon the cause of revivals, than that it should come to be generally identified, in the view of the church and nation, with the commotion and confusion of a Winebrennerian camp-meeting? Nothing more could be needed to tarnish its glory, and prostrate it completely. . . . Now I do not mean to place the New Measure interest as a whole on a parallel exactly with the spirit of such a noisy camp-meeting; though in principle and life, as we have already seen, it is the same system throughout. But may we not say that an injury of the same general nature, with what has just been supposed, is inflicted on the cause of revivals, when the attempt is made to identify it in like manner with this spurious system, at any stage of development in which it may happen to be found.[83]

Nevin said that to his mind the Puseyite refusal to admit the idea of true religious power, except in connection with a certain outward constitution of the church, as in the maxim, "no bishop, no church," sounds no more arrogant, intolerant or injurious to the cause of true piety, than the assertion that without New Measures there can be no revivals:

> . . . and I would as soon think of making diocesan episcopacy, or the use of robes, organs and wax candles (all good enough in their place) the "lever of Archimedes" for the exaltation of the German churches, as to raise into such consequence the power of the anxious bench. . . . Those who are doing this at the present time in the German churches, may possibly mean well, but their influence with regard to revivals is bad.[84]

Some of Nevin's critics, the Lutheran Observer in particular, had sought to justify New Measure revivals by saying that in judging the character of a religious awakening one is not to evaluate it in terms of the "instruments and agents by which it is accomplished," but by its results. This position, says Nevin, does an injustice to Jonathan Edwards by bringing to its support his assertion that God makes use of the foolish and weak things of the world, often for confounding the mighty and the wise. The application of this sentiment to New Measure revivals and New Measure men is a monstrous perversion of both Edwards and of the Apostle Paul, who first voiced this truth. Neither man meant that God uses spiritually weak men, men without brains, men who stand and walk in the element of the flesh and not in the element of the Spirit. Whom God would use, he first makes strong for the purpose inwardly, by the power of the Spirit. This quality is totally lacking in New Measure men who depend upon outward effect rather than inward power for their success.

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[83] Ibid., February 28, 1844, p. 1761. [84] Ibid.

> . . . I affirm that to estimate properly the constitution of a revival, we not only may, but if faithful to God and our own souls we must, take into consideration the character of the instrumentality from which it proceeds. It is in the highest degree dishonorable and injurious to the cause of revivals, to say, or in any way to encourage the supposition, that the value of religious awakening is not affected at all, by the tone and temper of the agency concerned in its production. . . . A revival is entitled to confidence, as a general thing, in proportion exactly, not to the intellectual, but to the spiritual force, that is engaged in carrying it forward. . . .[85]

While one can be sympathetic to Nevin's concern at this point, it would be fair to point out that the same criticism could be turned against the system of the Catechism. That he was aware of this fact is evident in his denunciation of those who held to the form of the Westminster Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism without penetrating to their inner spirit. Nevin's point seems to be that the same spirituality which is essential to a legitimate revival, had much better be used in bringing to bear upon the life of the church the Protestant faith as it came from the Reformation of the sixteenth century, with its distinctive form and spirit. Thus the Church would rise as legitimate Protestantism rather than in the genius and spirit of the spurious, rationalistic sect system and its New Measure heresy. One gets the feeling that Nevin really believed that the Church could get along without revivals at all, save in the sense that the Church would be revived if it went about its work in the terms spelled out in the system of the Catechism. If there had to be revivals, let them be in the succession and spirit of the revivals of Spener, Whitefield, Tennant and President Edwards, who worked by faith and prayer in the sphere of the Spirit, rather than in the tradition of the Anabaptists, Finney, Winebrenner and the Methodists, who urged the work by new, exciting and stimulating measures in the sphere of the flesh.

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[85] Ibid.

Nevin devoted the concluding chapter of his answer to what he felt was a necessary attempt to rescue the name of President Edwards from a slanderous use by the Lutheran Observer of his work Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England. Edwards, Nevin says, first showed that the religious movement of his day was a glorious work of God; then he proceeded to show that the objections sometimes raised against it had no force to overthrow its title to confidence and respect. He demonstrated the truth that high bodily affections, bodily exercises, audible demonstrations of feeling, etc., might well result from the power of a true work of God's Spirit, and that errors, follies, and irregularities might be expected to appear. However, these phenomena should not be allowed to destroy confidence in the movement as being from God. The error of the defenders of New Measures is that they begin by assuming that the present whirlwind excitement in the name of religion is a genuine manifestation of the power of God's Spirit, and then they use Edwards' arguments as positive proof of the fact, when they were never intended to be so used.

> Edwards made no such assumption himself in favor of the interest he undertook to defend. If these excitements be always, as a matter of course, the work of God, the argument from Edwards may be allowed to be good and sound, as it regards objections. If it could do that in the case of one form of religious excitement, it could do it in the case of any and every form of such excitement. If valid to authenticate the extravagance of the Anxious Bench in a regular church, it is valid to authenticate the noise and commotion of a Winebrennerian camp-meeting. . . .[86]

Nevin called to the attention of the defenders of New Measures Edwards' work The Marks of a Work of the True Spirit. This work devotes a section to what Edwards calls negative signs or "such as do not furnish any proper evidence that a work is not from the Spirit of God. . . ." These include the very items mistakenly adduced as positive proof of the genuineness of New Measure revivals. Edwards goes on to show what are the positive signs of a work of the Spirit of God. A careful examination of these, said Nevin, would render extravagant and absurd the idea that Edwards would identify himself with New Measures as embodied in the system of the Anxious Bench. This system did reveal itself to some extent in his age in the work of James Davenport, for example, who "esteemed at first as a pious and faithful minister, fell completely into the vortex of fanaticism and became an apostle of confusion among the churches."[87] Davenport exemplified all the vices of current New Measure men; he was "loud, vehement, intolerant; he encouraged his hearers to cry out; made excitement the test of conversion; exalted impulses and impressions above the word of God; and represented all public services in which there was not some visible agitation or noisy show of feeling as destitute of proper power and life."[88] Edwards would have nothing to do with this sort of revivalism; his spirit in his whole history and in all his works is in broad contrast to the spirit of Davenport and New Measure men.

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[86] Ibid., March 6, 1844, p. 1766.

In its broad aspects, Nevin was correct in his position regarding Edwards. However, Edwards' revivals were not the quiet, orderly services Nevin would require, as Jacob Helfenstein pointed out. Edwards justified outcries, fainting and bodily effects not only because they were evidences of a sinner's having gotten a new sense of the awfulness of hell and of the sovereignty of God, but because "they tend to have a happy influence on the minds of bystanders."[89] He did not condone hell-fire preaching, or the continuous use of "harsh and severe language" under the guise of "speaking the truth without mincing the matter," or as a device for producing a revival. Effective revival preaching must stem from and be guided by a carefully defined understanding of the psychology of man and the nature of true religion. For Edwards the effect produced in terms of convicting men of their sinfulness and of God's sovereignty, and not success in terms of mass hysteria or the number of conversions, was the valid criterion of measures. He and Nevin would be one in this insistence and in the further contention of Nevin that revivals should result from the general ecclesiastical culture of the church. Nevin cautiously avoided the subject of new forms and measures in his defense of Edwards. Edwards felt that one cannot limit God to traditional forms and measures, and that any new form or measure might be used which agrees with scripture, church order, and discipline as derived from scripture. At this juncture, Nevin was insisting upon the use of traditional forms and measures as the only means by which the German churches could or should rise out of their lethargy and complacency.

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[87] Ibid. [88] Ibid.

[89] Jonathan Edwards, Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England (New York: Dunning and Spaulding, 1832), p. 177.

Nevin's vigorous defense of his tract again brought various of his brethren to his defense. One brother who signed himself "Payson" called to Nevin's support the words of the president of Andover Seminary to the effect that where New Measures operate there can be no genuine revivals. The editor of the Messenger quoted from an article in the Lutheran Standard, printed at New Philadelphia, Ohio, to the effect that some Lutheran churches were abandoning New Measures after having tried them and found them wanting. He also noted,

> Our German Reformed Brethren are adopting a wise and correct course. Whilst they zealously advocate heartfelt piety and holy living, they at the same time take strong and decided ground against all extravagances and "new measures," by which course they advance the cause of true religion and preserve peace among themselves.[90]

Another brother who signed himself "Ursinus" agreed that genuine revivals were needed, but he pointed to the fact that churches, not a hundred miles from Chambersburg, which lately had been held up as models for their extensive revivals effected from the use of New Measures were now "converted into an arena of fierce strife and unholy contention seldom paralleled, and calculated to cast a shade of doubt upon the truth of the swelling statements which heralded their spiritual pre-eminence."[91] One wonders how much of this strife was due to the differences of opinion raised by Nevin's stand against New Measures. Ursinus also sent to the Messenger an extract from a letter written seventeen years previously by Lyman Beecher warning his fellow-ministers in the West that approbation of violent, ungoverned revivals, attended by excitement and disorder would result in disunion and civil war among the churches, would bring the cause of revivals into disrepute, would arouse determined opposition to a learned ministry which would give rise to a host of "ardent, inexperienced, imprudent young men . . . to obliterate civilization, and roll back the wheels of time to semi-barbarism. . . ."[92]

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[90] "New Measures Abandoned," an editorial in Weekly Messenger, IX (February 14, 1844), 1755.

[91] Ursinus, "Religious Revivals," Weekly Messenger, IX (February 28, 1844), 1762.

[92] Ursinus, "New Measure Evils," Weekly Messenger, IX (March 6, 1844), 1766.

Nevin was not alone in his opposition to New Measure revival.

Jacob Helfenstein held out to the end for New Measures, and dismissed Nevin's objections to the system of the Anxious Bench as largely irrelevant to the main issue of whether or not the judicious use of the anxious seat or any other new measure could serve a good purpose. Helfenstein also gives a hint of the effect that the controversy over New Measures had on revivalism in the German Reformed Church, at least, when he says,

> In conclusion, my brethren in the ministry will permit me to say, this is not a time in which the church should be contending about measures. . . . It is rather a time that calls for deep humilitation--earnest prayer, and most vigorous exertion. God has a controversy with his people. The Spirit has evidently been grieved away and revivals are almost unknown.[93]

On the other hand the Mercersburg Classis meeting in May, 1844, was happy to note that the Church had been delivered from the "fire of fanaticism" which had been raging about it and that,

> The plain and faithful preaching of God's word, the catechetical lecture, and pastoral visitation have prevailed against error, and given new proof that the means of Divine appointment are mighty to the accomplishment of his purpose.[94]

The Maryland Classis meeting also in May reported that the number of revivals had diminished, and yet the number of hopeful conversions had perhaps increased, that "a very marked uniformity of principle, of feeling, and of action has characterized the efforts of the brethren in their labours in the Gospel."[95] Catechetical instruction, pastoral visitation, the Sabbath School, the family altar had been gaining favor more and more among the brethren. The use of the Heidelberg Catechism was recommended as the best means of instruction in Christian doctrine. Similar reports are included in the proceedings of other Classis meetings in the spring of 1844. Nevin's efforts appear to have had the desired effect, in general, on the German Reformed Church.

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[93] J. H., "New Measures," Weekly Messenger, IX (April 3, 1844), 1782.

[94] Report of the proceedings of the Mercersburg Classis in Weekly Messenger, IX (May 29, 1844), 1815.

[95] Extracts from the proceedings of the Maryland Classis, Weekly Messenger, IX (June 12, 1844), 1822.

Shortly after this series defending The Anxious Bench began to run in the Weekly Messenger a second edition of The Anxious Bench was published in January 1844. The appearance of this work is significant in view of the fact that the final chapter spells out the system of the Catechism in fuller terms than had been employed in the original edition, and is indicative of a reorientation of Nevin's theology on the subjects of Christ, the Church, the ground and nature of Christian salvation and life. The major themes with which he deals here are spelled out fully in the sermon "Catholic Unity" which he subsequently preached in August, 1944. We shall examine these works in more detail in the following chapter. When Nevin preached "Catholic Unity" he was no longer oriented to Covenant Theology.

This reorientation of Nevin's thought appears so suddenly that one is scarcely prepared for it. His sermons preached during the thirties, the articles on "Faith" and "Worldly-Mindedness" are all within the framework of Federal Theology. The first edition of The Anxious Bench is a reaction against Finney's New Measures revivalism with which Princeton and others who opposed the revivals, for example Beecher and Nettleton, would agree.

One concludes, therefore, that Nevin's move to Mercersburg in 1840 was accompanied by no revolution in his thinking. During the thirties and early forties he had indicated that on some points he disagreed with various aspects of reigning Presbyterian orthodoxy.

Nevin had defined faith in terms of the exercise of the capacity of mind, when prompted by the Holy Sprit, to penetrate to and communicate with the realities of the world of the invisible and the eternal, so that this realm in which man's life is ultimately grounded is as real as the visible world of time and space is to the physical senses. In this respect he saw himself at variance with some Presbyterians of his day who, he says, defined faith in terms of the holding, via speculative reason, to a quantity of logical truths about religion accepted on the authority of Church or creed, or else arrived at by way of personal investigation and rational reflection.

He still held to the framework of Covenant Theology but on some points he had reinterpreted it. He saw the results of the Fall as the immersion of man's higher nature in the realm of the physical, so that its original capacity to converse with things eternal is blunted, leaving him preoccupied with the concerns of time and space. Here he had rethought the concept of Covenant Theology which saw the fall in terms of an arbitrary transfer to man of the guilt of Adam's sin. The significance of this point will be apparent when we come to discuss his doctrine of man.

He held to the Covenant concept that after the fall man retained a vestige of his moral sense, but for Nevin this was now primarily a vestige of his capacity for spiritual vision rather than a knowledge of the moral law of God, though he had retained this also. He still held to the strong Covenant emphasis on obedience of God's law, but law for Nevin was the total will of God for man's life, rather than law in terms of moral precepts or commandments standing over against man and demanding his obedience. The obedience required is that of inward surrender to the will of God rather than of outward compliance to specific laws.

The conflict between the system of church life under which he had been reared and the system of New Measures which had plagued him at Princeton had long since been resolved. Nevin had taken his stand with the general concept of the Church, its function and means of grace, which had characterized the right wing of the Reformation. In so doing, he decisively rejected the revivalistic, pietistic tradition which was having a hey-day among many Protestant churches in America, notably among the Methodists, Baptists, the sect groups, and to a lesser extent among the Presbyterian, Congregational, Lutheran and Reformed groups. He had concluded that the only way Protestantism could justify itself, and at the same time defend itself against the errors of popery and sectarianism, was to ground itself positively in the Reformation tradition rather than to launch an attack, in a negative way, on Rome and the sects. He maintained also that fidelity to the Reformation tradition should consist in honoring the inner spirit and genius rather than the letter of the tradition. Thus while one is unable to trace any fundamental changes in his theology between 1830-1844, one can see the solidifying of certain basic positions which underlie the re-orientation of his thinking in the Mercersburg Theology which emerges in the final chapter of the second edition of The Anxious Bench and in the sermon "Catholic Unity."

CHAPTER III

NEVIN, 1844-1852

We have arbitrarily divided the years 1840-1852 into two periods 1840-1843, 1844-1852 for two reasons. First, in 1844 Nevin's thinking exhibits an extensive re-orientation, and in several works between January and August 1844 he states clearly the doctrines of the sacraments, of Christ, of the Church, and of the nature of the Christian life which are characteristic of the Mercersburg Theology. From 1845 on he appears to be preoccupied with a critique of Rationalism and Sectarianism, with amplifying his theology and relating it to the church question as it had come to focus in various movements among them being the resurgence of interest in the Church among the Lutheran theologians in Germany, and in the Anglican Church. He turns to the Reformation and then to the early church for the substantial undergirding of his theology. In addition August 1844 marked the arrival at Mercersburg of Phillip Schaf with views regarding the Church, and the relationship of Protestantism to Romanism which were in substantial agreement with Nevin. It is our purpose therefore to note the major events of the years 1844-1852 and to examine the principal writings of Schaf and Nevin which gave voice to the theology which was identified with the seminary at Mercersburg.

Two statements by Nevin which indicate the reorientation of his thought were formulated before Schaf's arrival. In January 1844 a second edition of The Anxious Bench was published, the last chapter of which states briefly the themes dealt with in the sermon "Catholic Unity," preached August 21, 1844, the first elaborated and mature statement of the program of the Mercersburg Theology.

Nevin concludes his second edition of The Anxious Bench with a more fully developed version of the System of the Catechism than he had given in the first edition. There he had devoted not much more than a paragraph to the leading features of the system in terms simply of sermons full of unction and zeal, faithful pastoral care, systematic training in the Heidelberg Catechism, due attention to order and discipline. The second edition sees this system as involving the representative practices of a theory of religion vastly more deep and comprehensive than that of the systemof the Bench and of reigning Protestant orthodoxy. He sees Christianity as involving a general or universal force or life which stands above all individualism. He mentions the nature of man as generic, the nature of sin as an organic disease rooted in the race. He speaks of the generic Christ; of the Church as a spiritual constitution in organic relation to the life of Christ, the root from which it springs and is perpetually identified; of the Church as the medium through which the Christian life in terms of a life union with Christ is reached and maintained through participation in ordinances and sacraments which are channels of grace and power, established by God for this purpose. He speaks of salvation as a process which begins with the infant and ends with the resurrection.

On August 8, 1844, at the opening of the first Triennial Convention of the Reformed Protestant Dutch and the German Reformed churches at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Nevin preached a sermon titled "Catholic Unity" in which he developed the themes briefly stated in the second edition of The Anxious Bench. This sermon marks a milestone in the statement of his convictions regarding the sacraments, the Church, the relation of Christ and his work to the salvation of men, which constitute the substance of the Mercersburg Theology.

The Triennial Convention was the culmination of a relationship between the Dutch and German Reformed churches which began early in the colonial period of American history.[1] Through the years from 1794 to 1843 various attempts to draw the two churches toward eventual union culminated in a plan drawn up at Philadelphia in March, 1843, by which it was agreed that the two churches should hold a triennial convention to which the Dutch Church would send one-third and the German Church two-thirds of thirty-six delegates. The body thus formed was to have an advisory character only, with no judicial or legislative powers. "Its object is merely to consult as to the best method of promoting the Redeemer's Kingdom and the interests of the Reformed Church, and so as to carry on their missionary work in the West that there may be no interference with each other.[2]

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[1] Nevin sketches this relationship in some detail in the articles on the Heidelberg Catechism in Weekly Messenger, VII, 1417, 1421-22, 1429-30, 1433-34. A brief sketch of the events leading to the Tercentenary Convention will be found in James I. Good, History of the Reformed Church in the United States in the Nineteenth Century (New York: The Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1911), pp. 179-92.

In the sermon "Catholic Unity" Nevin turned to the question of the Church. He declares as a first principle the conviction that Christians are not called to seek such agreement among themselves as shall result in a Church that is one body and one spirit but rather to acknowledge that the Church is one body and one spirit already, and that Christians are bound to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.

> The unity of the Church is not something which results first from the thought and purpose of the membership, of which it is composed, but on the contrary, it is the ground out of which this membership itself springs, and in which it perpetually stands, and from which it must derive evermore all its harmony, and stability, and activity, and strength.[3]

From the beginning to the present this consciousness "has been uttering itself as with one mouth in the article of the creed, I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."[4] The unity of the church does not rule out the idea of difference and multiplicity, since it is only by these means that the Church can appear under an actual concrete form, and thus escape being a sheer abstraction. It does require that the various parts which constitute its difference and multiplicity shall be held together by a common principle. This principle holds in the person of Christ. The

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[2] Editorial in Weekly Messenger, VIII (April 5, 1843), 1571.

[3] J. W. Nevin, "Catholic Unity," Weekly Messenger, IX (August 21, 1844), 1861.

[4] Ibid.

Church

> . . . is composed of a vast number of individual members; but these are all actuated by the power of a common life, and the whole of this life gathers itself up ultimately or fundamentally in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the principle or root of the Church; and the Church through all ages, is one, simply because it stands in the presence and power of this root, universally and forever.[5]

The relationship which Christ sustains to the individual Christian is basic to this concept of the unity of the Church. In explaining how Christ relates to the individual in regeneration Nevin shows a definite change in his theology over the understanding of the relationship in Covenant Theology. The individual in regeneration "is not only placed in a new relation to the law, by the imputation of the Saviour's righteousness to him in an outward, forensic way," as Covenant Theology held, "but a new nature is imparted to him also, by an actual communication of the Saviour's life over into his person," by the power of the Holy Ghost.[6] The "new nature" is quite different from the "new system of thought and ideas" which the individual gets in regeneration as Covenant Theology understood it. The "new nature" is Christ's nature which unites in a real way the human and the divine natures. Its reception through faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit brings the individual within a new sphere, "the law of the spirit of life," which by a gradual process, culminating in the resurrection, grows and gathers strength to overpower "the law of sin and death" which ruled the old nature.

> The believer has indeed a separate individual existence, but this existence has its ground in the life of Christ, just as

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[5] _Ibid_.

[6] _Ibid_.

> in any other case the individual begins at first, and stands always afterwards, in the force of the generic nature to which it belongs. His sanctification does not consist in his being engaged simply to copy the excellencies of Christ, as a man might admire and copy the character of a Moses or a Paul; but it consists in this, that the very life of the Lord Jesus is found reaching over into his person and gradually transforming it with all its own heavenly force. The old nature is not at once destroyed; but the new nature of Christ is enclosed in it, as the papilio in the folds of the chrysalis, and in due time this last must triumph over the first entirely, leaving it behind as an empty sepulchre in the final resurrection. Thus emphatically, Christ and the believer are one.[7]

This is the mystical union, said Nevin, and its nature is deeper and more real than it is commonly and currently understood to be. The union of the believer with Christ is not simply with his nature as divine, nor is it simply a moral one, that is, a harmony of purpose, thought and feeling. It includes this but only as the by-product of a substantial and real union with Christ the generic head of the race as redeemed in his person, with his nature as human as well as his nature as divine.

> The whole humanity of Christ, soul and body, is carried over by the process of Christian salvation into the person of the believer; so that in the end his glorified body, no less than his glorified soul, will appear as the natural and necessary product of the life in which it is thus made to participate. His resurrection is only his regeneration fully revealed at last and complete.[8]

Nevin contends that the idea of this inward union of the believer with Christ, with the entire humanity of Christ, has been a vital part of the consciousness of the Church in all ages. It accounts for much of the favor shown the popish and semi-popish errors connected with the Lord's Supper, and for the earnestness with which the reformers of the sixteenth century generally held to the "doctrine of the real presence in the sacrament." The fact that they saw this more clearly than do contemporary Christians accounts for the difficulty Christians now have making sense out of Calvin's language with reference to the Lord's supper. Calvin, he says, is particularly strong on the point that "the life of the believer involves a communion with the body of Christ, as well as with his spirit." This concept of Christ's relation to the regenerate individual is the basis for the assertion of the unity of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ, the whole by which those who partake of the one and same life of Christ are vitally related and joined together. Its unity through all ages is organic. Here Nevin carefully defines the nature of the Church and its unity against all fragmentary views of the Church, "and any who would understand unity as a matter devised by common agreement." In the first place, the Church is not a "mere aggregation or collection of different individuals drawn together by similarity of interests and wants." Nor is it an abstraction according to which what is common to such multifarious groups is separated out and put together under a single term. It is not the "all that covers the actual extent of its membership." It is rather "the whole in which this membership is comprehended and determined"; the "general" which goes before the "particular" and "rules and conditions all its manifestations." The unity is organic in the sense that the parts spring forth from and are the revelation only of what was comprehended originally in the whole. So far as the human race is concerned, it is organically one as stemming from Adam, the generic head and common root of the race, who was not only "a man" but "the man" in whose person

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[7] Ibid. [8] Ibid.

"humanity as a whole" resided. Man is organically one and the same through all ages.

> And parallel with this precisely is the constitution of the Church. The second Adam corresponds in all respects with the first. He is not a man merely, an individual belonging to the race; but he is the man, emphatically the Son of Man, comprising in his person the new creation, or humanity recovered and redeemed, as a whole. Whatever the Church becomes in the way of development, it can never be more in fact than it was in him from the beginning. Its life is not multiplied nor extended in quantity by its growth. Christ is the root of the Church; and to the end of time it can include no more in its proper life, however widely distributed, than what is included in the root itself.[9]

We are not Christians each one by and for himself; we become Christians in and through the Church. Christians are all necessarily one before they can be many.

Further, the Church must be visible, real, historical, as well as invisible. Christ's life in the Church is "in the first place inward and invisible": but it must become visible to be real. Neither inward power nor outward form can exist without the other. Therefore, the Church must appear externally in the world, and the unity of the Church must appear in an outward visible way. This does not mean that the lack of outward visible unity overthrows the existence of the Church. Midst all the denominations, with their separate confessions and creeds, the life of the Church, with all its attributes, is actively at work, struggling to realize the image of its inward life.

> The "one body" most unfortunately is wanting for the present; but the "one Spirit" reigns substantially notwithstanding through all communions, and binds them together as a great spiritual whole. Joined together in the common life of Christ, in the possession of one faith, one hope, one baptism, the

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[9] Ibid.

> various divisions of the Christian world, are still organically the same Church. In this form, we hold fast to the idea of Catholic Unity, as the only ground in which any true Christianity, individual or particular, can possibly stand.[10]

Christians must not acquiesce in the fact that the Church is not now visibly one; they must lay to heart the evil that exists and seek and maintain unity. This unity does not demand a "single visible head," like the pope, nor does it require "a given organization stretching its arms from one end of the earth to the other." A crusade against sects or a society to put down sects is no answer either. Nevin believed that the Reformation, as it came from God, had not yet been conducted to its final form, and that what it had divided it would have power again in due time to reunite. However, before such could become an accomplished fact, Christians must expect, desire and work for it. Any union, to be valid and free, must be based on love and charity. Nevin advised the cultivation of these virtues as the beginning of unity. Beyond this, Christians must utilize every opportunity to advance the interests of catholic unity. He expressed the hope that out of the Triennial Convention might come impetus and encouragement in the direction at least of bringing together in a more free way, for mutual counsel and support, the two groups so closely related historically, geographically, and ecclesiastically.

Nevin expressed the further hope that the churches of the Reformation generally would seek a closer alliance. The tendencies taken by the Reformation of the sixteenth century had run to extremes in Protestantism, especially that aspect of the Reformation which stressed the liberty of the individual. The result has shown up in "bastard protestantism" which has appeared in Germany and the continent of Europe in "rationalism"; in Great Britain in the religious radicalism of dissenting groups with its "infidel and semi-infidel affinities;" and in the United States "in the unbridled licentiousness of private judgment, as it appears in the endless multiplication of sects. . . ." Having reached this extreme, he says, a reaction has set in which springs from a necessity "which holds in the inmost constitution of our nature . . . the character of our age . . . the inmost history of the Church."

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[10] *Ibid*.

> It is the grand rebounding movement of the Reformation itself, by which more fully than ever before is to be tried the truth and stability of the principles, from which the Reformation sprang, and by which it triumphed in the beginning.[11]

This reaction seemed to Nevin to account for the mysterious charm which popery had lately seemed to be exercising over men's minds, and to be the true secret of the remarkable success of the Oxford doctrines in the Episcopal Church in England and the United States. The cause of the Reformation, and thus of Protestantism, is not to be served by the sort of opposition to the errors of Rome and Puseyism displayed in the United States.

> In its blind zeal, and shallow knowledge, it sinks the Church to the level of a temperance society, strips the ministry of its divine commission and so of its divine authority, reduces the sacraments to mere signs, turns all that is mystical into the most trivial worldly sense, and so exalts what is individual above what is general and catholic, as in fact to throw open the door to the most rampant sectarian license, in the name of the gospel, that any may chose to demand.[12]

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[11] Ibid. [12] Ibid.

The answer to the crisis lies in a return to the principles of the Reformation, "not simply by holding fast stubbornly to the forms in which the faith of the Reformation was originally expressed, but by entering with free and profound insight into that faith itself."[13] The present crisis presents an opportunity to carry these principles through to a final consummation.

Thus by the close of 1844, and before the arrival of Philip Schaf at Mercersburg in August of that year, Nevin had arrived at the basic convictions which were the heart of the Mercersburg Theology.

Regeneration is not now for Nevin simply the imputation of the benefits of Christ's death and passion in a legal way, the rearrangement of the faculties, the impartation of a new system of thoughts and feelings about religion, as Covenant Theology held, These are involved in the transaction, but the heart of regeneration is the introduction into the believer of the power of a divine life. Salvation consists primarily in a life union of the believer with the total life of Christ, a union which progressively overcomes the law of sin and death at the heart of man's life in a process which culminates in the resurrection with the triumph of the law of the spirit of life.

He proclaimed as a first principle the unity of the Church as a visible, historical institution, as well as an invisible entity, in contrast to Covenant Theology which saw the invisible church as the true church. The Church is one because

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[13] Ibid.

Christians partake of the common life of Christ, the generic head of the redeemed, which from the beginning contained potentially the whole Church which has manifested itself in the particular churches. The proliferation of sects and denominations is an evil to be deplored, as a denial and destruction of the unity of the Church, and Christians are bound to yearn and work for the visible unity of the body of Christ.

Nevin had settled on the organic concept of the nature of man and of the Church as a basic presupposition. Man individually is an organic unity of body and soul, not a sand heap of separate faculties--physical, mental and spiritual. Mankind is organically one, the tree which developed from the root or seed Adam, the generic head of the race as fallen. The Church is organically one being the historical manifestation of what was originally comprehended in its root Christ, the generic head of the race as redeemed.

Nevin believed that Christianity was currently in a state of crisis which was to be understood as the rebellion of this basic organic character of man and the Church against excessive emphasis on individuality and the Reformation principle of liberty, and against the proliferation of sects and the subsequent division and disunion of the Church. The Reformation, which was as yet incomplete, was exerting the force of its faith in the crisis. A return to the spirit and faith of the Reformation, not to the letter of its theology was for him the answer to the crisis.

Philip Schaf, newly elected German Professor of Biblical Literature and Ecclesiastical History, arrived in America in time to attend the Triennial Convention of the Reformed Protestant Dutch and German Reformed churches at Harrisburg. A reprint of his ordination sermon delivered at Elberfeld, Germany, shortly before he set sail for America appeared in the Weekly Messenger the next week. The sermon indicates he considered his call to Mercersburg to be an opportunity for "German Evangelical Christians" to express their concern to answer the call of the German immigrant in America to save him from "a threefold abyss, on the verge of which he stands giddy, and into which he is likely to fall, without your timely help, Heathenism, Romanism, Sectarianism."[14]

Schaf's inaugural address delivered October 25, 1844, dealt with the "true life and spirit of the Reformation" and was hailed by the Weekly Messenger as a "masterly performance," abounding in "deep and solid thought" much of which was "elevated above the usual sphere of thought of most of the audience."[15] The last observation was prophetic as subsequent events were to show.

After the publication of the Nevin sermon "Catholic Unity" little of importance appears from his pen in the voice of his denomination from May 15, 1844, to August 13, 1845, surely quite a span of time for so prolific a writer and so vocal a personality. In the interim, part of his time and energy had been expended on the translating Schaf's inaugural address into English, and preparing a series of articles titled "Pseudo-Protestantism" which began to appear in the Messenger the week of August 13, 1845.

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[14] A reprint of Schaf's ordination sermon, translated from Krummacher's Palmblaetter in the Weekly Messenger, IX (August 28, 1844), 1869.

[15] Editorial "Inauguration of Dr. Schaf," Weekly Messenger, VIII (November 6, 1844), 1907.

Schaf's inaugural address under the title The Principle of Protestantism left the press in June of 1845. It contained a lengthy introduction by Nevin, and Nevin's sermon on "Catholic Unity" was appended to the book at Schaf's request. The editor of the Messenger gave the work favorable notice, but was careful to point out that the view taken toward the church question would prove satisfactory to some and unsatisfactory to others, and that the attitude taken toward the Roman Catholic Church would be found to be different from "that which has come recently to prevail in some quarters in this country, and also been virtually endorsed by the late General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church."[16] The Assembly, says the Messenger, in deciding that Roman Catholic baptism is invalid, has in fact pronounced a sentence of excommunication upon the entire Roman Catholic communion. Schaf's view of the Roman Church is found to be "more favorable" than that of the General Assembly. In view of the subsequent storm Schaf's work produced, this was undoubtedly the understatement of the year!

It is not our purpose at this point to enter into detailed examination of the positions taken by Schaf in this work. In brief he held that the main question of the time concerns the nature of the Church itself in its relation to the world and to single Christians. The Church is the body of Jesus Christ, through which alone the revelation God in Christ becomes effective in the history of the world. Outside the Church there is no christianity and no salvation. The Church is the mother from which individuals derive their religious life.

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[16] "The Principle of Protestantism," a book review in the Weekly Messenger, X (June 18, 1845), 2030.

The Church unfolds its inward life and power in a process of historical evolution or development in terms of the idea of later German philosophy according to which "history involves a continual progress towards something by means of dialectic contrapositions" until the ideal in Christ shall be fully actualized in humanity.[17] In this view the old Roman Catholic Church was the true bearer of Christianity to the time of the Reformation. The Reformation was at the same time a reaction against the errors of the Roman Catholic Church and the greatest act of the Roman Church itself, the ripe fruit of all its better tendencies. Protestantism therefore is not to be looked upon simply either as the restoration of the original state of the Church or as a revolutionary separation from the Catholic Church, but as a continuation of and advance on the life of the Roman Church. The religious movement which stemmed from the Reformation was itself a onesided development, its great defect being the want of an adequate conception of the Church and its relation to the individual Christian on the one hand and the general life of man on the other. Consequently, Protestantism is to be viewed as an interimistic movement which must appropriate whatever truth the errors which have arisen in her midst may contain and fall in with the general movement of history which points to a new era of the Church, Protestant Catholicism, which shall combine the truth of Roman Catholicism in terms of the authority of the Church, the value of tradition, and the objective character of the sacraments and Church with the positive gain of Protestantism. The completion of the Reformation will thus unite what has heretofore fallen asunder. The signs of the time point to this epochal "unitive reformation," and America, where the Church enjoys entire freedom, may well be the theatre in which it is accomplished.[18]

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[17] Philip Schaf, The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church (Chambersburg, Pa., 1845).

The Reformation was never intended to be either an absolute emancipation of the Christian life from all church authority or an exaltation of private judgment to the papal throne. The Reformers aimed only at such liberty of faith as would bind man to the grace of God for his salvation, and lead his conscience captive to God's word. Two positive principles came out of the Reformation, says Schaf. The first is the material or life principle of Protestantism,"the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through the merits of Jesus Christ, by means of living faith; that is the personal appropriation of Christ in the totality of the inner man."[19] This principle stood in opposition to the Roman view which makes faith and works parallel and is disposed to give the chief weight to works. To the material or life principle of the Reformation is joined the "formal or knowledge principle; which consists in this, that the word of God as it has been handed down to us in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, is the pure and proper source as well as the only certain measure, of all saving truth."[20] This principle stood in opposition to the Roman view which invests the word of God and tradition with parallel authority but in fact gives tradition preference over the Bible. Protestantism tended to neglect, not repudiate, works and tradition. Certain features of tradition may be undervalued, says Schaf, as for example, the tradition dealing with ancient customs and usages, the historical and exegetical tradition regarding the genuineness and integrity of sacred books, etc. But Protestantism can and must allow the authority of the "formal dogmatic tradition," which forms the channel by which the contents of the Bible are developed and carried forward in history in the Apostles' Creed, then in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds.

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[18] This is a summary of the main points of the 112 "Theses for the Time," _ibid_., pp. 177-90.

[19] _Ibid_., p. 182.

> This tradition therefore is not a part of the divine word separately taken from that which is written, but the contents of Scripture itself as apprehended and settled by the Church against the heresies past and always new appearing; not an independent source of revelation, but the one fountain of the written word, only rolling itself forward in the stream of church consciousness.[21]

In fact, the Lutheran and Reformed communions did appropriate the ecumenical symbols as agreeing with and interpretative of the Scriptures and formed themselves a peculiar tradition represented in their symbolical books. These are likewise formal dogmatic tradition expressing the faith of Protestantism in the Scriptures to which they refer still as the unerring fountain and norm of Christian knowledge. Adherence to this tradition enables Protestantism to escape the insuperable difficulties which dog the path of those who invest the Bible with a most abstract isolated character, interpose a lifeless void between its completion and the present and then interpret it according to the consciousness of the particular church to which they belong. Protestantism set men free from human ordinances running counter to these, but not to unbridled freedom destructive of the true life and consciousness of the church as it developed through the centuries.

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Nevin's introduction heartily approved and supported Schaf's point of view. His sermon on "Catholic Unity" had already given voice to many of the leading ideas of Schaf's work, particularly with reference to the character of Protestantism, and the nature of the Church.

Schaf's work was launched at a time when anti-Roman Catholic feeling was running at high tide in the United States. During the 1830's and early 1840's the dangers of Catholicism to American democracy were loudly trumpeted. Societies were formed to convert Catholics. Priests and nuns were pictured as lewd and immoral. The Catholic menace was tied in with the rising tide of Old World immigrants, and anti-Catholicism became an important factor in the American nativism of the 1830's. During the early 1840's the struggle by the Catholic hierarchy in New York to wrest control of church property from the laity, and the attempt of the Catholic Church to get state funds allocated to parochial schools aroused nativist tempers. Riots broke out in Philadelphia in 1844 when public school authorities bowed to Catholic demands that Catholic children be allowed to use their own Bibles and be excised from all religious instruction. In New York the Catholics were forced to defend their churches against anti-Catholic mobs aroused by the events in Philadelphia.[22]

Within the German Reformed Church itself J. F. Berg was an ardent anti-Romanist. At one time Nevin had supported his attacks on the Roman Church, so it is not at all surprising that Berg was sharply critical of the point of view expressed by Schaf and Nevin. While the work was praised by the Princeton Biblical Repertory it was criticised by the New York Evangelist, a Presbyterian paper, and the Christian Intelligencer of the Reformed Dutch Church as being Puseyism, while the Protestant Banner, Berg's paper, added to this epithet the charge that the work exhibited a Romanizing tendency, exalted tradition above Scripture, the Church above Christ, and the sacraments above personal faith.[23] Nevin declared that all these charges were made out of context without regard for the careful qualification with which Schaf had presented the subjects by men whose Protestantism is "so purely traditional and negative that the positive principle of the Reformation evidently has little or no real interest for their hearts."[24]

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[22] For an extended discussion of anti-Catholicism during the period see A. F. Tyler, Freedom's Ferment (The University of Minnesota Press, 1944), pp. 363-389; W. W. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), pp. 39 ff.

[23] Quoted by Nevin in "Schaf on Protestantism," Weekly Messenger, XI (September 24, 1845), 2083.

In a series of articles titled "Pseudo-Protestantism" which ran in the Messenger during August and part of September, 1845, Nevin answered the charge of a "Romanizing tendency" brought by the Protestant Banner. The charge, he said, resolved itself into two points, namely, that he refused "to unchurch absolutely the entire Roman communion as such" and that he held to "a spiritual real presence of Christ in the Eucharist."[25] Nevin pled guilty to both charges and asserted that it was no part of the orthodoxy of the German Reformed Church either to deny all church character to the Roman Catholic communion or to deny the spiritual real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The charge brought against him was part and parcel of a false tendency which has arisen within Protestantism which in its relation to Romanism turns Protestantism into a simply negative, destructive force, making it stand in mere abstract opposition to Rome and having no positive life of its own. This "pseudo-Protestantism," which has cut itself off from the true spirit of the Reformation was particularly unfortunate, especially at a time when Romanism appeared to be waking to new life on the American scene. He reiterated his conviction that Protestantism is a continuation of the life of the Church as it "rolled through the centuries before in the bosom of the Catholic Church" and that this is the only ground on which it can be vindicated as a work of God.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] J. W. Nevin, "Pseudo-Protestantism," Weekly Messenger, X (August 13, 1845), 2061.

Nevin sums up his defense of Schaf's book in terms which define his basic definition of the church question and the problem facing Protestantism as he saw it throughout the period 1844-1852. Practically everything he wrote for the Messenger and the Mercersburg Review is either a defense of or an expansion and explanation of this basic thesis.

> Dr. Schaf's book is characterized throughout by an active Church feeling, as distinguished from the simply congregational or atomistic spirit which has come to be so general. It is in this view an able vindication of Protestantism, in the first place as a legitimate result of the true Church life itself, as it stood before the Reformation; and then an assertion of its proper original character, under such aspect, against the false tendency (pseudo-protestantism), which is now threatening to overthrow the whole work in the way of rationalism and sectarism. This tendency of course is eminently unchurchly, and so in the same proportion antichristian at the same time; for it ignores and denies practically the real presence of the Savior as the Word made flesh, in the Church; which John tells us is one great mark of antichrist. The proper remedy for this, is the cultivation of a proper Church feeling; not of course as something that may be expected to swallow up and annihilate what is individual and personal in the life of the soul in God. Such a consummation of the Christian life must form, in the nature of the case, not a relapse to Romanism, as proposed by the Oxford school, and not a mummy-like imprisonment in the bandages of any modern sect as such in the way dreamed of by the Covenanters, Seceders, and Old Lutherans; but an actual advance of the Church itself to a new and higher platform of existence, on which all her divisions may be healed, and the way be prepared for her long captivity to come to an end, in the triumphant glories of the millenial period. All this it seems impossible to reach, without a much deeper sense of the true meaning of the Church, than is now found to prevail generally in the Protestant world.[26]

Rumbling of rising discontent within the German Reformed Church regarding the position taken by Nevin and Schaf manifest itself in a resolution adopted by the Philadelphia Classis and forwarded to the Weekly Messenger expressing regret that the editor of the Messenger had closed the columns of the periodical "against all discussion of the points of doctrine suggested by a book, entitled 'Principle of Protestantism' . . . whilst surrendering its columns to the discretion of the writer of 'Pseudo-Protestantism.'"[27] Further, Classis delegates to the approaching Synod were directed to urge these points upon the consideration of that body and to seek redress. The editor of the Messenger defended his refusal to publish an article by Jacob Jelfenstein on the ground that he did not believe Nevin or Schaf guilty of the unorthodox position of Puseyism ascribed to them and because the publication of such a charge would serve no end except that of disturbing the peace of the church. Nevin's articles on "Pseudo-Protestantism" has been given space, he said, to meet the unceremonious attack on him by the Protestant Banner. As the meeting of Synod approached, the Messenger gave way to increasing pressures and allowed those who took issue with the Mercersburg professors to express themselves.

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[26] Nevin, "Schaf on Protestantism," p. 2083.

The charges levelled against the professors, in addition to the charge of Puseyism, were in general that they were carrying the church in the direction of Romanism by defending the Roman Church as being a true part of Christ's church, and that the doctrine of the spiritual real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper in terms of Nevin's understanding would bring the doctrine "if not exactly to transubstantiation or consubstantiation, then to something very akin to or resembling them."[28]

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[27] Proceedings of the Philadelphia Classis, Weekly Messenger, XI (October 1, 1845), 2087.

The whole matter was brought to a head at Synod which met October 16, 1845, at York, Pennsylvania. The Philadelphia Classis submitted a series of resolutions with reference to Schaf's The Principles of Protestantism which it asked Synod to consider. The committee appointed to examine the resolutions found nothing in the work to substantiate the charges that it denied that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice, that it did not regard the Scriptures as fundamental and essential to the existence of Christianity; that it undervalued the Scriptures in favor of human addition or tradition; that with regard to the sacraments the work by implication denied that faith is the life-giving principle of Christianity, and that faith is superior in its efficacy to the sacraments; that by holding the sentiment that the sacraments depend not for their efficacy upon the spiritual state of the believer, the work contravened the truth that the sacraments without faith are unavailing; that the work erred in asserting that the ordinances of the church convey and confer life; and that it taught the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.[29]

On the contrary, Schaf's work expressly affirms that the scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice and indispensable to the continuance of the church. While Schaf places great value on tradition, he neither places it parallel with or over scripture, but makes scripture to be the norm and rule of the value of any traditional symbol. Schaf nowhere denies the primacy of faith, but he does say that in some instances the sacraments have been undervalued or practically forgotten in favor of faith. On this point the committee felt Schaf was correct and pointed to the Quakers as an example. Further, Schaf had nowhere dealt with the sacraments in the manner or to the extent implied by the resolutions, but where mention was made nothing was said to imply belief in the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The committee left open the question of the presence of Christ's humanity in connection with his divinity in the Lord's Supper since it was not involved in _The Principle of Protestantism_.

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[28] A member of the Philadelphia Classis, "The Spiritual Real Presence," Weekly Messenger, XI (October 8, 1845), 2090.

[29] Report of the Committee of Synod on the resolutions of the Philadelphia Classis in reference to Schaf's Principle of Protestantism, Acts and Proceedings of the Synod of the German Reformed Church of North America for 1845 (Chambersburg, 1845), pp. 72-80.

Opposition to adoption of the committee's report came chiefly from J. F. Berg, pastor of the Race Street German Reformed Church at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, long-time outspoken critic of Romanism. Berg lodged a written protest against the findings of the committee. He regretted having placed some false constructions on certain of Schaf's propositions and admitted that some of his misapprehensions had been cleared up. But he was still of the opinion that Schaf had made the judgment of the church, that is tradition, rather than scripture the norm of Christian truth. He held that the doctrine of the sacraments presented by the work in question "involves the germ of the so-called _opus operatum_ doctrine by which the sacraments are invested with inherent power to confer grace."[30] He accused the committee of having overlooked this doctrine in Nevin's sermon "Catholic Unity" in the appendix of the book and as subsequently asserted in "Pseudo-Protestantism." Further, says Berg, the nature of the presence of Christ's glorified humanity in the supper is dealt with also in "Catholic Unity" where it is defined as generic and not individual, and where it is asserted that in the Lord's Supper the worthy partaker receives the real human Christ.

The committee appointed to reply to Berg's "Protest" again defended Schaf's views with regard to the relation of tradition to the Bible. It reaffirmed the judgment that neither Nevin nor Schaf taught the bodily presence of Christ in the Supper. It insisted again that the question of the nature of Christ's presence in the Supper should be left open and undecided. Said the Committee:

> If the author of the protest and the majority of the brethren of the Philadelphia Classis differ from the Professors upon the doctrine of the presence of the glorified humanity of the blessed Saviour, in connection with his divinity, not in an individual but in a generic sense, not in the material elements but in the eucharist itself, it is for them to prove that the doctrine is at variance with the standards of the Church and the word of God. . . . Nor is it supposed for a moment that this view of the nature of the sacraments "involves the germ of the so called *opus operatum* doctrine. It is by *faith, and by faith alone* that any benefit is derived by the receiver from this holy ordinance.[31]

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[30] J. F. Berg, "Protest Against the Adoption of the Report of Synod," *ibid.*, pp. 81-86.

[31] *Acts and Proceedings of Synod*, p. 90.

The controversy did not die with the action of Synod. Berg suggested that it was too much to expect "either churches or ministers to decide the whole question of duty at the present crisis," and while he deprecated the thought of a violent rupture within the church, an "amicable separation" was greatly to be preferred to the effort to retain in the same communion "elements so discordant."[32]

Throughout the controversy preceding and immediately following the meeting of Synod Nevin was strangely silent, though he had spoken in his own defense at the meeting. He finally responded to an article by Jacob Helfenstein titled "Mercersburg Theology" which had appeared in the Lutheran Observer and the Christian Intelligencer. Helfenstein, says Nevin, had accused him of teaching the doctrine of the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and had challenged him to prove his doctrine from the Bible. Nevin denied that he had ever held Christ to be materially present in the Lord's Supper. He quoted at length from Ursinus' Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism to vindicate his contention that the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century held that by faith, not by mouth, participation in the Lord's Supper involves a real reception of Christ's true human life, "a true inward, vital conjunction with the very substance of the Incarnate Word itself" in a wholly spiritual, not material, way through the medium of the activity of the Holy Ghost.[33] He was happy to note also that Berg in a recent article in the Protestant Quarterly Review had taken pains to indicate that while he rejected the idea of "a real insertion of the believer into Christ's humanity" he was willing to concede "a real life union with the Redeemer's person, not moral nor legal, but mystical."[34] "This is truly refreshing," said Nevin. "I confess I have thought worse of the brother's theology. . . . It does appear to me that if Dr. Berg follows out his own concession of a real (not simply moral) union with Christ, he must be forced in the end to extend it to his human as well as his divine life."[36] Berg was not willing to follow his logical processes that far. He held to the concept of the mystical union as a precious Christian truth, but he would not budge from his position that it was a purely spiritual union "produced by the indwelling of the same spirit in the Father, in Christ, and in believers," and not a generic one involving his humanity.[36] The person of Christ is independent of his humanity. This position, Nevin replied, makes Christ's humanity simply an adjunct or appendage rather than a constituent of his person, and reduces the Incarnation to a mere Gnostic phantasy. The believer's union with Christ is spiritual certainly, not material or physical, but the life of Christ, as holding in the Spirit, includes his whole person. This point seems to have been the crux of the issue between Nevin and all his critics. Nevin held to an organistic psychology, as we have seen, in contrast to the faculty psychology generally accepted in his day. He held that here he was in essential agreement with the Reformers who never attempted to dissever Christ's spirit from his person of which his humanity was an integral part.[37] The difference between Nevin and his opponents, says Nevin, boiled down to the question,

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[32] J. H. Berg, "Letter to the Weekly Messenger," XI (December 24, 1845), 3139.

[33] J. W. Nevin, "Our Union with Christ," Weekly Messenger, XI (January 14, 1846), 2150.

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[34] Ibid. [35] Ibid.

[36] J. F. Berg, "Mystical Union," a letter, Weekly Messenger, XI (Jan. 28, 1846), 2158. See also J.F.Berg, "The Mystical Union," a reprint from the Protestant Quarterly Review in the Weekly Messenger, XI (February 11, 1846), p. 2165.

> Can the Spirit of Christ be the medium of a real communication of Christ's nature, including of course his pneumatic or glorified humanity, over to his people, or must all end in a moral (supernatural it may be) but still moral union only?[38]

As to Helfenstein's request that Nevin prove his doctrine from the Bible, Nevin replied that this was a natural resort for Helfenstein who could not use the Heidelberg Catechism against his theology. Nevin was quite willing that the doctrine should be tested by the Bible, but not by any or every man's interpretation of it. One must have some norm or standard of interpretation than mere private judgement.

> The Catechism and the Reformed confessions generally are not the Bible; but they exhibit certainly a commentary upon the Bible, which must be allowed to be of some weight against those who undertake to convict us by the authority as they say of the Bible, and after all offer only their own poor interpretation of the Bible, as sufficient to bear down not only the theology of Mercersburg, but the whole understanding also of the same Bible as it enters into the symbolical books of the Reformed Church.[39]

The exchange among Berg, Helfenstein and Nevin was given some relief by a half-humorous satire by W. M. Nevin, a brother of John Williamson and a professor at Marshall College, titled

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[37] J. W. Nevin, "The Human Christ," Weekly Messenger, XI (February 11, 1846), 2166.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

"Tradition, a Consultation between Squire Schlosser and Solomon Traxter." The Squire eventually convinced Solomon, who at first was a firm advocate of private judgment, that the professors by appealing to the authority of Church tradition as against mere private judgment in interpreting the Bible were doing no more than Solomon himself when he used Barnes' notes and Scott's Family Bible to prepare his Sunday School lesson. Solomon finally saw the justice of the Squire's contention that Berg and Helfenstein, in company with Campbell, Winebrenner and others who eschewed tradition and dug their system out of the Bible were preaching private views which constituted thenceforth a tradition through which their followers interpreted the Bible![40]

Here Nevin lays down two principles which are definitive of his theology. First, the Christian life is to be understood as a life union with Christ, not with his spirit simply but with his whole life, the theanthropic Christ, the indissoluble union of the divine and human in his person. The incarnation is a new fact in the order of the world, a new creation which takes up the old creation itself in a redemptive relationship. This is the mystical union. This fact is epitomized in the Lord's Supper and one can judge the validity of any theology by its doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Second, the Bible is normative for Christianity but only as interpreted in the light of this understanding of the fact of the Incarnation. Tradition, in the form primarily of the Apostles' Creed, becomes for Nevin the norm of

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[40] W. M. Nevin, "Tradition," Weekly Messenger, XI (February 25, 1846), 2174.

Biblical interpretation. We shall see these principles developed in The Mystical Presence and the articles on the Apostles' Creed.

The echoes of this discussion had scarcely subsided when another exchange developed over the theory of historical development as propounded by Schaf in his book, What is Church History, a Vindication of the Idea of Historical Development, published in the spring of 1846. Schaf said his purpose in publishing the book was to acquaint the American Church with the most recent German scholarship in the field of Church history. He maintained that schools of theology in America were at least thirty years behind the times since they were still clinging to Mosheim, the last of the mediating or moderate Lutheran Church historians of the eighteenth century representing the old Protestant orthodoxy as opposed to Pietism and Rationalism. This orthodoxy emphasized the static nature of the church as something complete from the beginning, in need of no development. It viewed the Reformation as a simple return to the original truth of the scripture and the standpoint of the first few centuries. The whole history of the church from that point to the Reformation was a meaningless hodge podge of unscriptural and superstitious traditions.

In contrast to this method of writing history Schaf set the Roman Catholic method and the Rationalistic historiography. Roman Catholics write history on the assumption of stability in doctrine and discipline from the beginning drawn from the Bible and tradition and brought to perfection through the medium of an uninterrupted succession of bishops from the very time of the apostles. Pietism, though holding the same system of faith as the old orthodoxy, nevertheless reacted against dead Lutheran orthodoxy and by its attack on the reigning church and its emphasis on the subjective side of Christian life laid the foundation for the Rationalist historians. Pietism and Rationalism come together at the point of unchurchliness. The Rationalists turned the history of the church into a chaos of motion or flow, with no principle of unity. Romanism and the older Protestant orthodoxy erred in placing too much emphasis on the objective and authoritative side of the Church; Pietism and Rationalism on the subjective side. Both came to "a dissolution by the irresistible process of their own development, under the one-sided tendency which belonged to each."[41] This dissolution formed the necessary transition to the modern German historiography, or the theory of organic development, in which the elements of truth on both sides, orthodox and rationalistic, are united in a higher point of view. Schaf characterizes the new historiography in regard to its handling of the life and doctrine of the church as that of "regular and organic development," and with regard to the view taken of orthodoxy and dissent as that of "free or protestant, evangelically catholic, ecclesiasticism."[42]

We shall examine the concept of development held by Nevin and Schaf in detail in a subsequent chapter. Suffice it for now to say that the newer historiography sees uninterrupted progress in the history of the church toward the end which God has ordained for it. Accordingly, church history is to be seen as the study of "the evolution of God's plan of redemption" in contrast to the dry, lifeless study of history "viewed as a mere outward conglomeration of facts, numbers and names, that are held together by no living principle."[43] This method makes history come alive.[44] It makes room for the doctrine of "an all-comprehending Providence" in that it sees an objective, divine force at work through the centuries. It is the corrective of the worst fault of that subjectivity which rests on the ground of private judgment and cuts itself off from the general and the universal. It gives a proper perspective on the sweep of church history overthrowing narrow and intolerant party spirit. This holds true especially with regard to the Roman Church.

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[41] Philip Schaf, What is Church History? A Vindication of the Idea of Historical Development (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1846), pp. 80-81.

[42] Ibid., p. 83.

> We must maintain for this Church a historical respect, and may not consent for any price, that on account of its great and terrible errors, the evangelical truths also which are among them, and which we too hold, should be assailed with profane hand.[45]

While Schaf looked forward to the time when the church would surmount its difficulties and be united, he maintained a skeptical attitude, to put it mildly, toward contemporary attempts at church union. He noted as a testimony to growing feeling of the evils of sectarianism the plan for a universal Protestant Council to be held in London to explore church union. But he deplored the underlying motive of the movement, namely, a union of Protestants to combat Rome. Church union thus be-

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[43] *Ibid.*, 115. [44] *Ibid.*, 116. [45] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

becomes a means not an end. By proposing a "United Apsotolical Protestant Confession" composed fresh from the Bible" and here he addresses himself to Dr. Schmucker of the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg, the author of the Confession, the union would run rough shod over the truth of doctrinal differences laboriously wrought out by all branches of the Church, including Rome. No church union can be built on the ruins of history. Any attempt at union must include the Roman Church.

The spring of 1846 following the publication of What Is Church History? witnessed a considerable discussion of the idea of historical development. Schaf's critics within the Reformed Church, Jacob Helfenstein being typical, noted that the theory of Historical Development which Schaf espoused, while differing in some respects, was essentially the same as that of Dr. Newman's, and that the same theory was used by Catholics to maintain errors sanctioned neither by Scripture nor Apostolic practice. If Schaf had limited himself to say". . . that the Church is destined to increase in light, purity and extent . . ." he would have been in agreement with the idea of progress as generally entertained by the Protestant Church.[46] But the theory as stated by Schaf, and as subscribed to by Nevin, was false on several points. First, the Apostles "not only furnished the churches with a perfect system of doctrine but also established among them a permanent order for their government."[47] Any concept which holds an advance beyond these is an unwarranted depreciation of the Apostolic ministry and a departure from the purity and simplicity of the primitive church. Second, Schaf's theory sanctions all the past errors which have corrupted the Church when it expresses strong sympathy with Romanism and sees it as the central stream by which the development of the Church took place. He makes the sects who maintained steadfast hold on the truth in the midst of papal corruption to amount to little or nothing. Third, he sanctions the errors of rationalism and Unitarianism, both of which defend this position on the ground that Christianity is a progressive system, that its truths gradually unfold. And further, while the theory professes to look forward, it actually looks backward and tends to give sanction to such superstitions as religious images and art, confession, church festivals as aids to devotion or right church feeling. It would revive usages long since condemned as unscriptural. "From such development may Heaven deliver us!"[48]

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[46] J. H. Helfenstein, "Historical Development," Weekly Messenger (September 9, 1846), p. 2286.

[47] Ibid.

Helfenstein had evidently missed Schaf's footnote on Newman's doctrine of development. Schaf notes that Newman, in contrast to the German theory of development, allows development only within Roman Catholicism, and sees Protestantism as having fallen away from history into abiding progressive corruption. Newman also holds to the infallibility of the Roman Church and sees every development as of force for all time. Schaf, on the other hand, sees some of the developments, the papacy for example, as necessary only for the needs of a particular time and place. Helfenstein's criticism points up the basic differences between reigning American orthodoxy which viewed Christianity as a system of doctrine divinely revealed and susceptible of clearer and purer understanding as against Nevin and Schaf who saw Christianity as holding in the fact of the Incarnation unfolding itself in a historical process. American orthodoxy saw Protestantism as the bulwark of the tradition in its primitive purity as against Nevin and Schaf who saw both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism as in the main stream of the developing or unfolding tradition. Here are the fundamental issues as between Nevin and Schaf and their antagonists.

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[48] Ibid.

The summer of 1846 also saw considerable controvery arising out of an attack made in the Christian Intelligencer on Schaf's views on the "middle state" contained in an essay The Sin Against the Holy Spirit written during his student days in Germany. One gathers from the discussion that Schaf had advanced the idea that there may be an offer of the grace of the gospel after death to the heathen who had no chance of salvation in the present world.[49] The Dutch Church and some of the Reformed brethren affected to be scandalized that such a view was being taught in the seminary at Mercersburg. Schaf admitted he had advanced the idea in his essay, but was highly indignant that anyone should pass off a somewhat juvenile work, written at a time when his thinking was only in the growing stage, as representing his present view. He denied that he was teaching the doctrine of a state of grace after death, but he did not deny the validity of the idea and hoped sometime to publish his more mature views on the subject. The Philadelphia Classis requested Synod to "inquire into Dr. Schaf's views concerning the intermediate state, to ascertain whether he believes that death terminates the probation of all men, and closes to them the gospel offer of pardon."[50] The resolution came at the insistence of J. F. Berg who undoubtedly saw here another instance of the Romanizing tendency at Mercersburg, inasmuch as the resolution also attacked the doctrine that the Romish Church was the main stream in which the one life of the Church was organically comprehended and carried forward and that it was necessary for the wants of a particular period. The committee of Synod which interviewed Schaf with reference to his views on the intermediate state reported that though it could not endorse the view of Schaf it did not think the matter of sufficient importance to require any special action of Synod. Synod did take action, however, holding that it could not endorse Schaf's view as contained in his statement to the committee.

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[49] Editorial, "Our Relations to the Dutch Church," Weekly Messenger (August 12, 1846), p. 2270.

Nevin himself seems not to have been immediately involved in this discussion, but he did express his views on the subject in a review published in the Mercersburg Review, July, 1849, of a book titled Heaven; or An Earnest Inquiry into the Abode of the Sainted Dead by the Reverend H. Harbaugh. Nevin affirms that there is an intermediate or middle state, and that this state is required by the fact that salvation is a process which cannot be counted as complete until the resurrection, the final triumph over death. The period between death and resurrection falls within the process of redemption, not beyond it, and belongs to the state of mortality rather than to the heavenly state in the full sense of the saints after resurrection. In the middle state the reign of death continues, but all is ripening at the same time for the outburst of a higher life in which mortality shall put on immortality. On the question of whether any of the human race will have a probation extended to them after death, Nevin says he bowed to the decision of the Church which forbade meddling with the question in any positive way. He did venture the opinion that it would be going too far to consign millions of heathen to perdition, and that the best course would be to affirm neither salvation nor perdition in their case. He agreed with Harbaugh that infants who die are saved, but affirms that such salvation must involve "an evolution of reason and will in a human way; the knowledge of Christ in some way preached or made known, and a free closure, as the old divines say, with the terms of life presented in his person; otherwise all will become magic."[51]

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[50] Extracts from the Proceedings of the Philadelphia Classis, Weekly Messenger (October 17, 1846), p. 2301.

Nevin agreed fully with Schaf on the doctrine of historical development and over the next several years developed his defense of Protestantism on this ground in a series of articles which we shall presently note. Protestantism, he staunchly maintained, could not be justified or defended save as it was held to be in strict continuity with the life of the Church as it developed in Romanism. Four years after their publication he was complaining that neither Schaf's The Principle of Protestantism nor his What Is Church History? had ever received the serious attention they really deserved.[52]

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[51] J. W. Nevin, "The Sainted Dead," Mercersburg Review, H. A. Mish, printer, "Journal Office," Mercersburg, Pa., I (July, 1849), 400.

The serious attention to the theory of development did not come for several more years. The review came finally in 1854 from the pen of Charles Hodge, one of the most articulate representatives of Presbyterian orthodoxy, and perhaps the most serious critic of the Mercersburg movement. The occasion for Hodge's review was the publication in English in 1853 of Schaf's History of the Apostolic Church. The notice of this book was actually an attempt to deal with the whole theory of church and historical development which the Mercersburg School had been championing over the years. The suspicion that the latest book by Schaf had a Romanizing or, at least, anti-Protestant leaven is well founded, says Hodge, both on the grounds of the status and antecedents of the author, and in the character of the book itself. The external circumstance which gives rise to this suspicion is his association with Dr. Nevin. Nevin, especially in his later writings, has so impugned the principles of the Protestant Reformation as to forfeit entirely the confidence of the entire Protestant community. He doubtless had in mind here such articles of Nevin as "The Anglican Crisis," "Early Christianity," "Cyprian." The public generally, he continues, has attributed Nevin's views to the fact that he is a disciple of Schaf. This is a mistake. Nevin's views and principles were well formulated before Schaf ever came to this country, and it does Schaf wrong to make him responsible for his views. So long as he does not publicly dissent from Nevin's views, he cannot expect the Protestant community to regard him with confidence.

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[52] See for example J. W. Nevin, "True and False Protestantism," Mercersburg Review (1849), pp. 83-104.

Hodge characterized the Mercersburg System as Nevin developed it in the Mercersburg Review as "anti-Protestantism in its theory of Christianity and religion; in its idea of the Church, of the relative authority of Scripture and tradition, of justification, of the sacraments and of the ministry."[53] On the question of justification and the authority of Scriptures he held Schaf to be on sound Protestant ground. Schaf's anti-Protestant principles are apprehended in his theory of development or are its legitimate consequences. Schaf and Nevin held to this theory in common for a time. Nevin now has given himself up to that feature of the theory which necessitates a return to Rome, while Schaf has remained true to that feature of the theory which "enables him to look on Rome as a station long since past, in the onward progress of the Church, to which she can no more return than a man can become a boy."[54]

Since much of Hodge's criticism concerns facets of Mercersburg Theology which we have yet to examine, we simply note the criticisms and shall look at them in more detail in another connection.

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[53] Charles Hodge, "Dr. Schaf's Apostolic Church," The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review (1854), p. 153.

[54] Ibid., p. 157.

In the spring of 1846 Nevin published his book titled The Mystical Presence, the first extensive discussion of Mercersburg Theology. In October 1846 he preached a sermon titled "The Church" at the last meeting of Synod. Both these documents are important as statements of Nevin's doctrine of the sacraments, of Christ and the Church. The Mystical Presence, he says, grew "directly out of some controversy which has had place, during the past year, in the German Reformed Church, on the subject to which it relates."[55]

In The Mystical Presence Nevin argued that modern Protestantism was chargeable with a serious defection from original Protestant orthodoxy on the subject of the Lord's Supper, and that this defection had been accompanied by a loss of the "true idea of the Church." This state of affairs could not be condoned on the ground that the subject of the Eucharist was a secondary concern in theology.

> As the Eucharist forms the very heart of the whole Christian worship, so it is clear that the entire question of the Church, which all are compelled to acknowledge, the great life-problem of the age, centres ultimately in the sacramental question as its inmost heart and core. Our view of the Lord's Supper must ever condition and rule in the end our view of Christ's person and the conception we form of the Church. It must influence at the same time, very materially, our whole system of theology, as well as all our ideas of ecclesiastical history.[56]

Nevin devoted the bulk of his work, therefore, to defining what the Reformed view had been on the subject of the Lord's Supper in contrast to views which had come to prevail in his day. He gave considerable space to his own theological statement of the doctrine in terms which he held overcame the chief difficulties inherent in the Reformed doctrine as it came to mature form in the thought of Calvin.

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[55] J. W. Nevin, The Mystical Presence (Philadelphia, Pa.: S. R. Fisher and Co., 1847), p. 3.

[56] Ibid.

Nevin held that the sect system in America, and he pointed to the Baptists and Methodists as examples, had shorn the Lord's Supper of all significance and power, had reduced it to a mere outward sign whose efficacy depended upon the inward state of the subject. The American Lutheran Church had given up altogether the sacramental doctrine of Luther and along with this the original genius and life of the Lutheran Confession. The Reformed churches had not only rejected but had forgotten their original doctrine, and now held to the Zuinglian rather than the Calvinistic doctrine. This involved a question of practical import for the Reformed Church, for if Calvinism necessarily runs into Zuinglianism on this subject, one may well despair of the whole interest, since no church can stand which is constitutionally unsacramental. Those churches which still retained the sacrament had fallen in with the "modern Puritan" theory which at the most admitted a communion with Christ in his divine nature, by which was meant simply a quickening of the appropriation of the benefits of the atonement by faith in no way different from the appropriation of other means of grace.

Nevin contrasted this view of the Lord's Supper with what he held to be the original and true Reformed doctrine central to which was the conviction that in the Lord's Supper the communicant participates in a real way in the substantial life of the Risen Christ, that is, in his incarnate human nature, though now glorified and immaterial. The sacrament carries "an objective force," independent of faith although received only by faith.[57] The Lord's Supper is a mystery: it constitutes a distinctive means of grace. It epitomizes the fact that within the Church, the extension in history of the divine-human life of Christ, the individual is saved by a real and not simply moral union with Christ. Nevin showed by extensive quotations that this was the view of the sixteenth century Reformed faith and that it agreed also with the theology of the early church as against the modern Puritan view represented by such Congregational and Presbyterian theologians as Jonathan Edwards, Timothy Dwight, John Dick, Albert Barnes and others.

Thus Nevin attempted to force the Reformed churches to face up to their own distinctive tradition on the subject of the Lord's Supper, not only because he was interested in recovering the tradition but also because he believed that any modification of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper necessarily involves a change of all other doctrinal positions. If one begins his practical church life with a high theory of the sacraments, as Nevin apparently did, one cannot accept a low view of Christ and the church such as he saw in Puritanism with its affinity for Rationalism. The two will not coalesce. Hence Nevin argued that the Reformation theory of the Eucharist necessitated a doctrine of Christ and the Church which squared with the sacramental theory.

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[57] Ibid., p. 62.

Nevin also went to great lengths to establish a groundwork for his doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the doctrine of the Incarnation. He breaks with the old supernaturalism which operated in an external and mechanical way above and outside of nature. He holds to a supernaturalism also, but one which posits an organic relationship between supernature and nature as a new Fact, a new order of existence in history. This Fact is an abiding one holding in the Incarnation, continuing in the life of the Church in history and progressively assimilating to itself the whole order of nature and history, raising it into the power of its own life. The Incarnation is for Nevin the basis upon which he builds his whole sacramental and churchly theology. He further spends considerable space explaining this concept of the generic as against the individual nature of Christ and the implication of this concept for the understanding of the mystical union and the Lord's Supper.

Immediate reaction to Nevin's work was slow in appearing. Inevitably it was alternately attacked and defended by the Reformed themselves. Those who criticized Nevin saw in The Mystical Presence further proof of his Romanizing tendency as well as a departure from the faith of the Reformation on the vital doctrine of justification. Dr. Hodge of Princeton gave the work its most scholarly and developed criticism. We shall discuss the exchange on the subject between Nevin and Hodge in separate chapters and note at this point only that Hodge contended that the true Reformed Doctrine was essentially that of Zuingli, and that Christ's benefits, not Christ's person, are available to the participant in the Lord's Supper. He also attacked Nevin's doctrines of Christ's person and its significance for the doctrines of the Church and man's salvation.

In the sermon on the Church which he had delivered at the meeting of Synod, October 15, 1846, Nevin spelled out his doctrine of Church and sacraments in the same terms as he used in The Mystical Presence and in the sermon on "Catholic Unity."

He took a "high" position on the question of the Church. The sermon was designed, he says in the preface, to promote church feeling in opposition to the spirit of religious self-reliance so characteristic of American Protestantism and the Puritan theory of the gospel. The German Reformed Church is bound, by her history and constitution to stand by the Protestant faith of the sixteenth century in the objective character of the Church and her means of grace and to remain true in this way to the Catholic side of the Reformation, which has been well nigh wrecked by the rampant individualism of reigning protestantism. The sense of the objective in religion creates a demand for a liturgical worship, that is a worship which "sinks the individual and particular in the power of what is universal and constant."[58] He, therefore, contended for the "objective, life-bearing character of the Church" as the continuation in history of the Incarnation and held that "all the regular and proper organs and functions by which the Church is carried forward among men for its own ends, are divine organs and divine functions."[59] In view of Nevin's previous emphasis on "sermons full of unction and zeal" in the system of the Catechism it is interesting that in this sermon he never mentions preaching in his list of the functions of the ministry, which he describes as an office whose functions bear the character of objective force or virtue, a character conveyed by ordination. In all Nevin's writings of this period one finds him magnifying the priestly functions of the church and its ministry, and this is especially noticeable in "The Church."

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[58] J. W. Nevin, "The Church," a sermon preached at the opening of Synod at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, October 15, 1846 (Chambersburg, Pa., 1847), pp. 4-5.

Berg again accused Nevin of a "Romanizing tendency" and contended that approbation of this sermon on "The Church" by the Catholic Herald of Philadelphia was proof of the tendency. Nevin countered that "tendency" is a relative term, and that he pled guilty to the charge if it meant that he was shrinking from tendency toward the opposite and worse extreme of unchurchly, unsacramental Socinianism. This heresy, in company with Rationalism and Unitarianism, reduced the Church to a mere human institution and made the sacraments "as void of grace in themselves as the toasts of a Fourth of July celebration."[60] Of the two tendencies, the attitude of sympathy toward the Roman position has far more right on its side.

In a series of "Letters to Dr. Nevin," typical of the criticism of Nevin's works by a small group within his church, Berg charged Nevin specifically with having given tradition precedence over the Bible as the rule of faith and private judgment; of having abandoned the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith; of having embraced the Eutychian position on the person of Christ; of having tended toward the Roman Catholic doctrine on the sacraments; of having refused to fight Rome and the pope. We intend to discuss in another place the difference between Nevin and Berg on the doctrines of Christ's person and of justification by faith. On the question of tradition versus the Bible and private judgment Berg said that the latter is the ultimate source of authority and rule of faith.

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[59] Ibid., p. 24.

[60] J. W. Nevin, "The Church Supernatural," Weekly Messenger, XII (August 4, 1847), 2474.

> The Bible is my Rule and my only Rule! Does not your theory ascribe too much to the general influence of the Church upon the mind and heart and too little to the grace of God in its operation upon personal character.[61]

Every church, Berg continued, has its traditions which are binding upon those in its communion insofar as they concur with the dictates of his conscience. But when tradition is exalted by the Church to superiority over the Word of God, one may not safely hold fellowship with it.

> If in defining your view, you had contented yourself with asserting the value and importance of tradition, in its legitimate province, you would never have heard a word of objection from me on that score; but when you insist that formal dogmatic tradition is absolutely indispensable to the completion of the Rule of Faith, I must join issue with you.[62]

Here, one assumes, he is referring to Nevin's endorsement of Schaf's view with reference to formal dogmatic tradition.

Nevin agreed with Berg that the Bible is the "infallible norm or measure" of Christian truth, but the question of the "form" in which this truth is to be apprehended "makes tradition indispensible."[63] In order to pass over into the life of the world the Bible must assume the character of a system, theoretical and practical, which is the result of a continuous evolving of the sense of the written Word itself. This becomes tradition, and, as such, is necessary to the life of the Church.

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[61] J. F. Berg, "To Dr. Nevin," Weekly Messenger, XIII (March 29, 1848), 2610.

[62] Ibid., April 19, 1848, p. 2622.

> The question is not the supreme authority of the Bible, nor the sufficiency of God's Spirit to lead us to a proper understanding of its contents. On this we are happily agreed. But, how is the mind of the Spirit, in the Bible, to be rightly discerned and apprehended by the individual Christian?[64]

On this subject Nevin consistently maintained that the Bible must be interpreted according to church tradition which unfolds the sense and meaning of the truth there revealed. On this point, he held the Apostles' Creed to be the master key.

A second edition of Nevin's work on the Heidelberg Catechism came out in the spring of 1847. It repeats the sections on the history of the Catechism. But this second edition has a conspicuously different theological orientation than the first. Whereas Nevin had noted there a close relationship between the Dutch and German Reformed churches, because of their common allegiance to the Heidelberg Catechism, he now sees the Dutch Church as essentially rationalistic and as having fallen in with modern Puritan theology. Whereas he had seen the theological spirit of the Heidelberg Catechism as Calvinism modified in some of its harsher aspects by various Reformed groups, he now interprets it as Calvinism modified by Lutheran modes of thought especially on the question of the Lord's Supper, and he holds that in spirit the German Reformed and Lutheran churches have a distinct affinity for each other. This switch is interesting in view of the fact that he had formerly contended that the close relationship which existed in various places between the two churches would prove embarrassing to the Reformed churches in proportion to the extent to which they would be able to recover their own distinctive spirit and genius. In commenting on the spirit of the Catechism, Nevin says that while its theology is Calvinistic, its spirit is German and has a distinct affinity for Lutheranism. The Reformed Church in Germany arose in the midst of a controversy between Lutherans over the eucharistic question as between a Lutheran and a Calvinist interpretation of the mode of Christ's presence in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Augsburg Confession, which gave expression to the Calvinist point of view, was held in high regard by the Church of the Palatinate whence the Heidelberg Catechism originated. "The Heidelberg Catechism was designed to interpret rather than to contradict the Augsburg Confession; to explain the sense in which it was held by the Church in the Palatinate. . . . How in such circumstances could the Heidelberg Catechism be anything else, than simply German Calvinistic, or semi-Lutheran, we may say, in its theological constitution and spirit."[65]

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[63] J. W. Nevin, "To Dr. Berg," Weekly Messenger, XIII (May 3, 1848), 2630.

[64] Ibid.

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[65] J. W. Nevin, History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism (Chembersburg: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1847), pp. 142-43.

Nevin noted that the Reformed and Lutheran churches had now come to a formal union in Germany and Prussia. The two German churches ought to be one in America as well as Europe in view of their similarity in theology and spirit. He held that the differences which developed between the Lutheran and Reformed traditions in the sixteenth century particularly on the question of the sacraments were "unavoidably necessary, in the circumstance of the age."

> Where two sides of a vital, fundamental truth, thus fall asunder for the understanding, it seems to be in general necessary, that the difference should be pushed out to the point of full formal contradiction, before the way can be opened for a final reconciliation, in which proper justice may be secured to the rights of both.[66]

Luther and Calvin were the instruments of a resistless, general movement of history. While they were the product of one and the same movement they represented divergent tendencies which, according to the theory of historical development, were necessary to bring out the full truth of the old catholic life in newer and higher form. Unfortunately the tendencies resolved themselves into two distinct communions even though they approached each other in the Augsburg Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.

> With all their opposition, the two creeds in Germany could never fully fly asunder; their mutual repulsion always showing in fact the force of a mutual attraction, as though each were all the time tormented with the secret feeling, that it could not be complete without the other. It is only in the German church indeed, we may say, that the two great divisions of the Protestant evangelical faith have seemed able, to this day, to understand one another at all, in their principal difference, so as to perceive clearly their own contradiction or agreement in its true ground.[67]

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[66] Ibid., pp. 11-12. [67] Ibid., p. 141.

Since the German Reformed Church arose in the Palatinate out of a "dialectic process," a struggle between "high Lutheranism and Calvinistic Lutheranism,"[68] and in view of the fact that the dialectic process had worked itself out, it was time for the two communions to fall in freely with the general movement of history in the direction of a higher form of Christianity in which differences are reconciled after having served the purpose of bringing out the full orbed truth of the gospel.

Nevin noted again the strong catholic, sacramental, churchly feeling of the Heidelberg Catechism and urged upon the church a serious consideration of the forms of worship in the old German liturgy of the Palatinate as embodying and expressing the theory of religion in the Heidelberg Catechism. The spirit of the Catechism is in full conformity with the doctrine and spirit of the Apostles' Creed, and with "the sense of objective, the historical, the catholic, and the always enduring in the church."[69] It operates on the theory that religion is something that rests in the general life of the church and is "capable of organic transmission; not by blood, nor by the force of mere natural example and teaching; but by the order of grace, as a divine historical constitution in the Church, including resources living capacities and powers, in its own being, for this very purpose."[70] In view of the sacramental and catholic character of its creed the German Reformed Church requires a life and mode of thought which is churchly and in harmony with its historical connections and association.

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[68] _Ibid_., p. 142. [69] _Ibid_., p. 148. [70] _Ibid_., p. 157.

> They include the altar, the organ and the gown; church lessons and a church year, with its regular cycle of religious festivals; repetitions of the Lord's Prayer and Creed; liturgical services, an entire order of worship in short, which to the nostrils of modern Puritanism, it is to be feared, would carry no small stench of popery itself throughout.[71]

Before leaving this discussion one should say that Nevin's interest in the Lutheran Church at this point was undoubtedly due to his interest in contemporary German Lutheran theology of the "mediating school." He maintained that American divines who had some acquaintance with German learning were translating the work of theologians and Biblical scholars--Reinhard, Storr, Knapp, Ernesti--who antedated the true scientific standpoint of contemporary German learning. While there were among the more sound theologians of this school men who tried to defend orthodoxy against rationalism, nevertheless their whole posture was rationalistic. Still, he complained, this school of theology is recognized in America as the only safe form of thinking, while ". . . the far deeper and infinitely more spiritual efforts by which the theology of the present time in the hands of such men as Dorner, G. A. Meier, Julius Mueller and others of like spirit is struggling to surmount forever the contradictions of the old standpoint, are superciliously condemned as transcendental nonsense . . ."[72] Men of "like spirit" were Nitzsch, Sartorius, Olshausen, Tholuck, Ullmann, Rothe. These men were in general supporters of the Lutheran-Reformed merger in Germany. They picked up from Schleiermacher and Neander the emphasis on the centrality of Christ and the new emphasis on the church. They were more orthodox in their treatment of these subjects than Schleiermacher and more aware of the church as an historical body than Neander. They were less rigid, however, than the churchly and confessional Lutheran revival of the 1830's with its high church tendency emphasizing sacraments, ancient liturgical tradition, ecclesiastical organization and purity of doctrine as essentials of the true church as a historical body. The "mediating school" aired its views in a journal edited by Ullman titled Theologische Studien and Kritiken. It was from this journal that Nevin took an article by Ullman, "The Distinctive Character of Christianity" which he used as a preliminary essay to The Mystical Presence. Ullman, appealing to Schleiermacher who sought to make the person of Christ central to the interpretation of Christianity, held the distinctive character of Christianity to be neither its doctrine nor ethics, but rather the peculiar constitution and religious significance of Christ who united humanity and divinity truly and perfectly in his person. Nevin also quoted Dorner, Olshausen, Tholuck in support of his doctrine of Christ's work and person, and his relationship to the Church. As early as 1844 in the second edition of The Anxious Bench he had appealed to Sartorius in support of his doctrine of sin. It was from this "mediating school" that Nevin undoubtedly picked up ideas such as the concept of Christ's nature as generic, organic participation in Adam's sin and in the new creation in Christ.

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[71] _Ibid_., p. 153.

[72] Nevin, _The Mystical Presence_, pp. 4-5.

Thus from 1840 to 1847 there were some radical shifts in Nevin's thinking. The dissatisfaction which he felt in the late thirties with his general doctrinal position has blossomed into a definite stand against the reigning spirit of American Protestantism, largely defined in terms of Puritanism oriented to Covenant Theology, and the rationalism of the empiricist tradition. The shift in Nevin's thinking has appeared chiefly in his doctrines of Christ, and of the church and in his concept of the meaning and significance of history. From a high doctrine of the sacraments which he holds is that of the Reformation as it came to maturity in Calvin's thought and was given expression in later Reformed Confessions, he has moved to a Christology grounded in the Incarnation which sees the Christian life as one lived in union with the divine-human Christ as the ground of the new creation comprehended in Christ's person as generic, rather than in terms of obedience simply to the law of God made possible by a redemptive work based on a legal transaction between the Father and Son, the results of which redound to the benefit of the believer in a mechanical fashion. He defines Christianity as a new life in Christ rather than a system of doctrine divinely revealed. In the same way he has rejected the old supernaturalism with its dualism of natural and supernatural. His view of the church has changed from the invisible church of Puritanism to a visible, objective, life-bearing institution unfolding in history from the fact of the Incarnation. He has moved from the Puritan and sectarian emphasis which roots theology in the Bible and private judgment to one which grounds theology in the Bible but in the Bible as interpreted in terms of the creeds of the early church, the Apostles' Creed particularly, which constitute the unfolding consciousness of the Church as to the realities comprehended in the gospel. He has grounded his new theology in what he claims was the position of the Protestant churches of the sixteenth century which were in essential agreement with the creeds of the early church. The direction and form which his doctrines have taken have been oriented to the newer German theology pioneers by Schleiermacher with its rejection of the rationalist tradition and adapted by the "mediating school" in the Lutheran Church with its rethinking of the doctrines of the Church and Christology. His attitude toward the whole history of the church and of the Roman Church in particular under the influence of the German concept of historical development and his own concept of the church has changed from one of negative criticism of Romanism as the antichrist to a positive appreciation of Romanism as a legitimate phase of the main stream in the ongoing development of the church. From his point of view Protestantism stood in a false position both in its theory of the sacraments, Christology and Church, which he defined as essentially Rationalistic, and in its understanding of and relationship to the past life of the Church.

In a series of articles in the Weekly Messenger during the summer of 1847 Nevin thought he saw in Horace Bushnell's Discourses on Christian Nurture published in 1846 a glimmer of hope that religion of the modern Puritan brand was showing at least a healthful tendency in the direction of sound church feeling and true church faith when Bushnell asserts the organic nature of the life of God in the Christian world as laying a proper foundation for the idea of educational religion. But with all his admiration for the position taken by Bushnell, Nevin concluded that he based his theory of educational piety on the same defective view of Christianity that characterized Puritanism generally. As a protest against the individualism of Puritanism his tract is good, but "it makes no account of the Church as a new supernatural constitution added to the constitution of mere nature; and in consequence of this, its theory of religion remains at last rationalistic."[73] Nevin was to find the same basic defense in Bushnell's God in Christ published in 1849. He honored Bushnell for his struggle against the actual theology of Puritanism in his honest inquiry into the central questions of the age, the nature of Christ's person and the true idea of the Church as determined by this doctrine. Nevertheless he disliked Bushnell's tolerant attitude towards Unitarianism, his view of the atonement in terms of "aesthetic salvation," and his distaste for dogma. Christianity is indeed life and not doctrine, Nevin affirms, but as life it lays claim to the understanding as full as to the will. And it must generate a theology or theoretic religion as well as a religion of feeling and practice. This takes the form not of dead outward tradition but of inward, dynamic movement. Christianity starts in the Creed and is true only as it grows forth from this root from age to age. By failing to recognize this fact, Bushnell is not prepared to do justice to the historical, objective side of Christianity. He lets his New England habit of thought get the better of his churchly tendency.

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[73] J. W. Nevin, "Educational Religion," a review of Horace Bushnell's Discourses on Christian Nurture, Weekly Messenger, p. 2461.

In 1848 the Alumni Association of Marshall College established a journal to provide a vehicle through which Nevin could express his views in a more permanent and elaborate form than the pages of the Weekly Messenger afforded. The journal aptly titled Mercersburg Review appeared on the first of January 1849 and every two months thereafter. The prospectus stated that the journal proposed to represent ". . . in philosophy and religion, the system of thinking which has come to be identified extensively in this country, with the institutions at Mercersburg"; that it would ". . . be made to rest throughout on the basis of the Apostles' Creed, taken in its own proper and original sense"; that it would be "historical and churchly"; and that it would be "Protestant, of course, in opposition to the corruptions of Rome; but Catholic, at the same time, in striving to honor and save the glorious and sublime truths out of which these corruptions for the most part spring."[74] It warned that its controversy with Rome would have no companionship with the radical and rationalistic spirit of the age engaged in the same pursuit. The prospectus must have been written by Nevin.

Nevin naturally became the most consistent contributor to the Review. His major productions reveal a pattern of thought, one might say a progression of thought, which, in the opinion of his opponents, and some of his friends was carrying him closer and closer to Rome. During the years from 1842-1847 he seems to have been chiefly concerned with defining the doctrines of the Sacraments, Christ and the Church, and with proving his thesis that contemporary Protestantism both in Europe and America represented a material departure from faith of the Reformation, his chief target of criticism being New England Puritanism and the sect system. To this period belongs his series on the Heidelberg Catechism in The Messenger, later revised and published in book form; the sermons "Catholic Unity" and "The Church"; the series titled "Pseudo-Protestantism"; and his most extensive work The Mystical Presence. During this period also came his exchange with Hodge over the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In "Antichrist," and in several extended series in the Mercersburg Review titled "The Anglican Crisis," "The Apostles' Creed," "Cyprian," and "Early Christianity" which appeared between 1848-1852 he sought to show the utter untenability of the claim of the sects, the Puritan churches and the Anglicans that in their own way each represented a return to the purity of the early church before it was corrupted and turned into a nightmare of apostasy by the development of Romanism and popery.

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[74] Preliminary Statement in the Mercersburg Review, (January, 1849), pp. 7-8.

In Antichrist he holds that the mark of antichrist, the spirit of heresy and schism, is the denial that Christ came in the flesh. Throughout the history of the church this heresy has manifest itself as variants of the two heresies with which the early church struggled, namely, Ebionism and Gnosticism.

The revelation of Antichrist is currently Rationalism and Sectarianism, both widely characteristic of modern Protestant Christianity. Rationalism rejects the whole idea of anything more than a common human life in Christ's person, while Sectarianism is ever inclined "to place Christ wholly in the clouds, or to turn him into an ideal phantom, that it may be left the more free in the exercise of its subjectivity."[75]

This denial of Christ ends in the denial of the idea of the Church. Both manifestations of Antichrist cut themselves off from the past life of the Church, from all creeds and confessions. The Sect in particular becomes only a caricature of the Church based on its own interpretation of the Bible. It turns the idea of one, holy, catholic church into "a sheer invisibility . . . an idealistic, Gnostic abstraction, while at the same time it wants to claim for itself all the prerogatives of the Church."[76] The only corrective of this plague and of Rationalism is a revival of the idea of the Church as an object of faith in the terms spelled out in the Apostles' Creed, a real, objective, historical, supernatural fact.

The full import of this assertion is brought out in the series on the Apostles' Creed which ran in the Review during the spring and early summer of 1849. Here Nevin contends that the Apostles' Creed is the norm by which any theory of Christianity and the Church must be measured. The Creed is no work of mere outward authority imposed on the Church. It is rather the "substance of Christianity in the form of faith."[77] In this sense it differs from other creeds, confessions and catechisms which are the production of reflection and represent Christianity under a reflex view, as summaries of the contents of the faith. The Apostles' Creed, on the contrary, is the direct, immediate utterance of faith itself concerning the realities of the world of the spiritual and the eternal.

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[75] J. W. Nevin, Antichrist or The Spirit of Sect and Schism (New York: John S. Taylor, 1846), p. 46.

[76] Ibid., p. 74.

[77] J. W. Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed," Mercersburg Review, I (May, 1849), 204.

> The direct and immediate communication of our nature with this higher world, in virtue of its original capacity for such purpose, the state or activity in which this communication holds, is itself precisely what we are to understand by faith. It is the form or inward habit of the soul, in actual or felt correspondence with things unseen and eternal.[78]

The object of faith is always the supernatural; its content is divine truth. Its general object is the revelation of God, whether through nature, or prophet, or the full revelation in the Word made flesh.

> Christ is the absolute and ultimate sense of all God's revelations; and so we say of the Christian faith that it is the end of all this faith, the only form in which finally correspondence with the invisible world can be made complete. . . . Any true creed must be in the end Christianity. Christianity then is the absolute creed. Its very form primarily is that of faith, in its highest and most perfect power, as called into exercise by the revelation which God has made of himself in his Son Jesus Christ.[79]

This is to say that the Creed came into being in the form of faith as the result of a gradual unfolding, a steady growth and externalization in a free and spontaneous way of the collective consciousness of the early church regarding the substance of Christianity as it stood revealed in Christ.

> It was never intended to be a theory of religion; it was not exhibited as a formulary imposed by outward authority, nor as the result of any process of reflection. It presented itself

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[78] _Ibid._, p. 209. [79] _Ibid_., p. 212.

> to the world simply as a firm affirmation, on the part of the Church, of what Christianity was to her living consciousness in the way of direct and immediate fact. It embraces propositions, of course, for the understanding; which, moreover, it is quite possible to accept, and repeat with the lips, in a merely notional way; but the propositions themselves are no product of thought, comparison and deduction; they are the utterance only of what is immediately at hand in the proper christian consciousness itself; and they can be truly understood, only where this consciousness prevails. This is the form of the Creed. It has its very being in the element and sphere of faith; and it holds there, in the character of a direct spontaneous witness, with the mouth, to the great central realities of faith as they are immediately felt in the heart.[80]

The early church had no idea of a "bound scheme of words" handed down by the apostles, but it did have ". . . a most distinct and strong sense of the actual contents of the christian faith as historically or traditionally carried forward from the apostolical age in the life of the church. . . ."[81] This sense of the "inward substance" of the christian faith finally became permanently fixed in the Creed which utters in an immediate and direct way the fact of Christianity, the new order of life apprehended in the person of Christ.

> The Creed is the utterance of this mystery as it unfolds itself by Christ, in the consciousness of the christian world. All forms a single revelation, which takes effect, however, in the way of magnificent process, starting in the bosom of the Father, and completing itself finally in the full glories of the new earth and new heavens. The end accordingly, grows out of the beginning, and is comprehended in it from the start. The new creation commences with the Father, enters the world through the incarnation of the Son, and runs its course in the world's life subsequently, by the Holy Ghost constantly present and always active in the Church.[82]

Through the Creed the church defines itself as One, holy and Catholic, as a supernatural constitution (the communion of saints) historically present in the world, binding all ages of the church together as a single whole and destined to break forth into the full triumph of the resurrection and the glories of a new heaven and a new earth.

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[80] Ibid., p. 214. [81] Ibid., p. 221. [82] Ibid., p. 320.

The whole subject of the Creed suggests several pertinent ideas regarding the relationship among the Creed, the Bible, the Church and Theology generally. Nevin notes first that the early Church did not derive the Creed from the Bible since its main substance was in use before the New Testament was formed. It was produced from the living sense of Christ's presence and is in harmony with the Bible for it has to do with the central revelation of the Bible, the mystery of the Word made Flesh. Christianity is a Fact in itself, independent of and before the Bible, a new creation in the form of life. Hence there is an absolute necessity for a Christian tradition in the Church, not as something against or foreign to the Bible but which starts from the original substance of Christianity as it underlies the Bible and becomes the living stream into which the sense of the Bible is poured. Second, the Creed represents the primary substance of Christianity as it passed over from Christ into the general life of his people the Church. The Church is therefore a divine fact preceding the Bible, and so an article of faith more immediately than the Bible itself. According to the Creed it is the Church which is the living revelation of Christ's presence and power in the world from age to age, and it lays the foundation for the dignity and authority of the Bible which is Christ's written word. Actually the two must go together, the Church being ruled by the Bible, the Bible by the life of the Church. If this be reasoning in a circle, said Nevin, so be it!

The settlement of existing theological and ecclesiastical difficulties, says Nevin, awaits a true and hearty submission of all groups to the authority of the Creed which is the root out of which all true theology grows.[82] Theology in any other form, even that which seems to be biblical, is pure rationalism, faith built on intellection, unless its biblicity squares with the substance of Christianity embodied in the Creed. On this ground the Episcopalians, for example, are engaged in a vain and hopeless task trying to justify episcopacy as outwardly prescribed in the New Testament and therefore as the necessary hedge and guardian of Christianity. Episcopalians would have an argument of great weight and force in their favor if they could show their favorite church polity to be necessary to the conservation of the great catholic ideas that enter into the primitive faith. On this ground, the sects also convict themselves of falsehood with the United Brethren, Albright Brethren, Winebrennerians and a score of others all playing the same tune and one trying to outdo another in its zeal for Biblical religion and its aversion to the Creed.

Nevin holds that the virtual abandonment of the Creed by New England Puritanism is the measure of its abandonment of the ground on which the early church stood, despite its claim to be a return to the pure faith of the early church. He notes, for instance, the common practice of Congregationalists of using covenants or forms of profession and engagement when receiving members into full communion. But it would be hard to find any who would be content to use the Apostles' Creed in this way or even to be guided by it in construcing a profession, or who use it in catechetical instruction or repeat it in public worship. Any minister who would use it would be suspected of "some secret hankering after Rome." Even as between Puritanism and original Protestantism, the difference in practice argues a considerable removal in inward habit away from the latter--a fact which ought to challenge notice.

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[82] *Ibid*., p. 320.

For Nevin, fidelity to the Creed is therefore the norm of sound church character, and the test of any doctrine whether or not it is explicitly stated in the Creed. Any abandonment of this ground distinguishes the spirit of sect and schism which is of necessity therefore violently unhistorical and unchurchly.

In the series of "Early Christianity" written in 1851 Nevin set himself to the task of showing that modern Protestantism, whether in its Episcopalian or Congregational form, had no ground for claiming to defend Protestantism as a repristination of what Christianity was at the beginning, in the fourth, the third or the second century before the grand apostasy of Romanism set in with its system of papacy, episcopacy, priesthood, liturgy, and sacraments containing supernatural virtue. Nevin advanced as the major thesis of his series the following proposition:

> Whatever differences there may be between the first ages and those that followed, it is still plain enough that the course of things was from the very start towards that order at least, which afterwards prevailed; that this later order therefore stands bound by true historical connection with what went before; and that Protestantism accordingly, as a still more advaned period in the general movement of history, holds a living relation to the first period only through the medium of

> the second, and is just as little a copy of the one in form as it is of the other.[83]

As between Romanism which refutes this view and insists that its system has been handed down from the time of the apostles, and the Protestants who claim for their by no means harmonious systems a return to things as they were in the first ages, Nevin prefers the Roman view as nearer the truth even though it is blind to the movement of God in history. Though there were faults and corruptions in the history of the Roman Church the reigning course of the Church from the beginning was wholly consonant with the nature of Christianity as voiced by the Apostles' Creed and with the character of the Church as it stood in the fourth and fifth centuries.

> This implies of course that even the Papacy itself, towards which at least the whole system was carried with intrinsic necessity from the beginning, came in with reason and right, and had a mission to fulfil in the service of Christianity that could not have been fulfilled as well in any other way. No one indeed can study the history of the church soberly, it seems to us, without seeing this in the actual course of events. The grand bulwark of the true religion, through the whole period of the middle ages, was beyond all question the ecclesiastical organization that centered in the popes or bishops of Rome. Without this, the church would have fallen to pieces, hundreds of years before the Reformation.[84]

To allow the Protestant claim is to negate all previous Christianity from the sixteenth century back to the apostles, to give the lie to Christ's promise that his church could not fail, and to reject completely the supernatural mystery of the holy catholic church in the form in which it challenges our faith in the Apostles' Creed.

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[84] *Ibid.*, p. 561.

> No defence of Protestantism in this form can stand. To make the Reformation a mere rebellion, a radical revolution, a violent breaking away from the whole authority of the past, is to give it a purely human or rather an actually diabolical character. It comes then just to this, that either the rebellion was diabolical or else the ancient church back to the second century was the work of the Devil and not Christ's work. We are shut up to the necessity of rejecting one, in order that we may choose the other; for they are opposite interests, and the case will not allow us to acknowledge both at once.[85]

Protestantism can defend itself only as it sees itself in union with the original fact of Christianity, through the medium of the actual history of this fact as it is displayed in the progress of the old Catholic church from the second century to the sixteenth. This defense involves of necessity the idea of historical development according to which both Romanism and Catholicism fall short of the full idea of Christianity and need something beyond themselves for their own completion.

In a series titled "Cyprian" which ran in the Review in 1852 Nevin pointed to Cyprian the church father of the third century as vindication of his contention that Christianity as it developed up to the time of the Reformation was wholly Catholic and that its leading features--its doctrine of the Church, of salvation, the Sacraments--were universally held in the third century.

Nevin says that one finds in Cyprian a doctrine of the Church which agreed in all respects with the Apostles' Creed, a real constitution carrying in itself by divine appointment actual supernatural and heavenly powers of one order with the grace and power brought to light in Christ and not to be found in the world under any other form. Separation from the Church as the one only

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[85] Ibid., IV (1852), 25.

Divinely constituted medium and channel of salvation involves necessarily separation from Christ and exposure to everlasting death. The unity of the church is also a cardinal doctrine with Cyprian, and the entire structure rests on the Episcopate in strict apostolic succession. Every bishop in his own sphere is a representative and organ of the Divine Head of the Church, but no bishop can be said to be a representative of Christ in his separate capacity. The episcopate must be in unity with itself, and each bishop to be an organ of Christ must be in union and harmony with the entire office. While the supremacy of the bishop of Rome was not in Cyprian's mind in the terms in which the church later thought of the supremacy of the pope, Cyprian nevertheless saw an actual primacy and real center of unity for the Episcopate in the pontificate of the Bishop of Rome which was regarded as flowing with such right of priority from the place originally assigned to Peter by Christ.

If the episcopate is sundered from this unity it can have no force and becomes schism. It can never generate or uphold a divine church life, says Nevin, in the form of Anglicanism, for example. The notion of any simply human organization of the church founded on the will of men or on the letter of the Bible as in Congregationalism would have been for Cyprian the very perfection of rationalism and unbelief. Even Presbyterianism, though it acknowledges a ministry of divine origin, was not enough for Cyprian. He would hear of no parity of the clergy. The order of the ministry started not with the people or the clergy but at the summit with Christ, the head of the universal organism, then the

Apostolate continued by regular succession in the Episcopate, then the ministry in its lower orders, and finally the body of people held in connection with Christ through the medium of this hierarchy.

Nevin goes to considerable length to show from the writings of the early church fathers that this concept of the church developed from the earliest Christian times, as soon as one passes beyond the age of the New Testament. And it held in universal authority beyond the third century. In "Early Christianity" and "Cyprian" Nevin also sees as part of this whole system a theory of the sacraments as real channels of grace, the necessity of confession and the grace of ministerial absolution, belief in miracles, belief in the value of celibacy and voluntary poverty, etc.

Now the object he has in mind in his study of the early Church, says Nevin, is not to condemn or approve the system one finds there. He wishes simply to make clear the historical facts and to show that modern Evangelical Puritanism and the sect system are at war with Christianity as it stood in the first ages reaching back to the age immediately following the Apostles and not simply to the Nicene period and following. The question with which Protestantism must deal is not with the Papacy as such, nor with Episcopacy, or Presbytery, or sacramental grace, or the authority of Holy Scripture. The prior question which must be answered is: "Has there ever been in the world such a Divine constitution as the Holy Catholic Church in the sense of the ancient creeds?" The simple historical fact is that there was. Puritanism says there was not. It thus breaks with the universal Christianity of the first ages and turns its own creed into a lie. The Church of Cyprian grew in direct continuity with the faith of the early church, and contained all the elements which emerged in full blown Roman Catholicism.

It was Nevin's contention, therefore, that Protestants generally stood in a false position by claiming to be a return to the purity of the early Church whether in the form of Puritanism based on a literal and absolute Biblicism, or in the form of Anglicanism based on the creeds, and chiefly on what he considered to be a legalistic interpretation of Scripture as to church government.

In "The Anglican Crisis" published during the summer of 1851 Nevin took note of the crisis in the Church of England occasioned by the Gorham case and the proposal to reëstablish the Roman episcopate as apropos to this whole question. As early as the 1830's Nevin said that a look at the tracts had given him his first glimpse of sound church feeling. Now he lauded the movement for pointing up the necessity for re-examining the question of the Church particularly as it relates to the nature of Protestantism and the issues between it and Romanism. Puseyism had raised in dramatic form the broad question, should Protestantism discard as at war with the Bible the concepts of sacramental grace and the original Catholic doctrine concerning the Church as they stood in universal authority before and during the Reformation and fall back on the Bible and private judgment as the true and only safe rule of Protestantism? The issue at bottom is one of "Church or no-church," and Protestants ought not dismiss the serious searchings of the Oxford Movement as silly puerilities.

Nevin was critical of the Anglican Church for making Episcopacy with its outward succession from the time of the apostles in and of itself the article of a standing or falling church. The question which must first be settled is the question of the Church, a question which must be settled before the question of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism or any other supposed divine right ecclesiastical polity may be decided. This holds true for the idea of sacramental grace also. The Church, in the old ecclesiastical sense, is not ". . . a stiff persuasion that certain arrangements are of divine appointment, and a disposition to stickle for them accordingly as the lines and stakes that go to fix the conception . . ."[86] The idea of the Church as a supernatural fact, having its ground and form in the Incarnation is the sine qua non of all discussion of ecclesiastical polity or sacramental theory. This feeling, says Nevin, has latterly entered deeply into the Tractarian movement, and constitutes its great benefit regardless of the tendency it shows to pass over to full Romanism. The controversy, especially in the form it has taken as an open reconsideration of the Protestant controversy with Rome, is powerfully shaking the ecclesiastical pretension of the Establishment to be in harmony with the old Catholic doctrine of the Church.

In the face of the fact that the Anglican Church could not make good its pretension Nevin raised the question of the alternatives on the Church question. He suggested several which we shall examine fully in a subsequent chapter: (1) the possibility that Puritanism is right after all and Protestantism ought to fall over to the logical end of Puritanism, namely, Baptistic Independency; (2) the possibility that the ecclesiastical machinery of Anglicanism could be trusted to maintain the old church ideal; (3) the possibility of a return to Rome; (4) the possibility of a new apostolic commission, a new start which would supercede both Romanism and Protestantism. He rejected all four alternatives and maintained that the only live alternative for the thoughtful lay in the idea of historical development according to which without prejudice either to Romanism, first in order, or to Protestantism, as a real advance on Romanism, the present state of the church is to be seen as interimistic and a transition to a church life which will combine the virtues of both. However, if one's choice were shut up to the four alternatives on the Church question which he had suggested, the decided advantage lies with Romanism.

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[86] J. W. Nevin, "The Anglican Crisis," Mercersburg Review, III (1851), 377.

Nevin was aware, however, of the defects of Romanism despite the fear of his friends, and the claim of his critics, for example Charles Hodge, that the course he was pursuing was leading him straight to Rome. In discussing the arguments for Romanism advanced by Orestes Brownson, a recent convert to Roman Catholicism, Nevin attacked the claim of the Roman Church to be the infallible interpreter of the Christian faith understood in terms of a supernatural revelation once delivered. Nevin holds that this claim in its own way is as defective as that Protestantism which sees Christianity as a supernatural revelation open to man's reason, the only infallible witness man needs. Both views fail to allow the supernatural to come into any real union with the natural, and are thus guilty of an abstract supernatural. Both turn faith into an exercise of reason and allow no capacity on the part of man for perceiving and apprehending immediately the realities of the invisible and supernatural. Catholicism violates man's freedom of private judgment and emphasizes the general and objective to the detriment of the individual and the private; false Protestantism magnifies freedom at the expense of authority. Catholicism's mistake is not in arming the pope with authority but in arming him in such a way as to nullify the true idea of human freedom.

Any right apprehension of Christianity must be one which holds in balance the objective realities of the faith in terms of the fact of Christ's person, the Church, and its sacraments with the individual, subjective, personal side of religion in terms of man's freedom, and the general laws of human nature in its capacity for apprehending the objective supernatural realities of the faith.

We have thus attempted to trace the movement of Nevin's thought from the early 1830's through to 1852. Our task from this point on will be to amplify the major themes of the Mercersburg Theology which emerged in 1844, namely, sacraments, Christology, Church and the position of Protestantism in its relation to the Roman Church. An attempt to summarize Nevin's thought as we have seen it develop through this period is somewhat of a task.

We have seen him move from the Puritanism of Princeton with its ground in Covenant Theology to a position influenced philosophically by German idealism, and what he considered to be the theological position of the Reformation as it grew logically out of the Roman Church and the steady development of the Christian faith through this medium from the early ages of the Church. We have seen him reject Christianity as a series of revealed propositions for the mind to one in which Christianity is seen as a Fact comprehended in the person of Christ who bridges the gap between the supernatural and the natural thus introducing into human nature itself the divine life which redeems human nature by raising it into its own sphere. On the basis of the organic concept of nature and history he sees this Fact as a continuing reality in history, in the Church, incorporating into itself man himself and more and more of the world's life. We have seen him move from a position which makes the Bible the medium of revelation, to one which sees Christ himself as the substance of the revelation as apprehended in the consciousness of the Church and given voice in its creeds which become the norm, in the form of faith, by which the Bible is to be understood. In a word the doctrine of the Incarnation has become central to theology in contrast to the abstract supernaturalism of his early training. He identified Rationalism and Sectarianism as the subverters of the true theory of Christianity, and has identified the real problem of the age as that of recovering the true doctrine of the Church as opposed to the false theory of these two heretical points of view. He no longer identifies the Roman Church as antichrist, but now sees it as in the true line of development of the Church, and holds that Protestantism in its more tenable forms is mere negative Romanism, having lost contact with its real ground in the sixteenth century, while in its extreme tendencies of Rationalism and Sectarianism, Protestantism exhibits marks of the antichrist. It is probably a fair judgment to say that he moved from a position in which he began by championing a return to the Protestantism of the Reformation as a legitimate continuation of the Church as it had developed in its Roman form to one in which he went far in conceding much to the Roman position. At any rate, the future of the Church depended upon a rapprochment between the valid life of both Romanism and Protestantism.

Suffice it for now to say that when he retired from his teaching position at Mercersburg in 1852 there were those among his friends and enemies who believed he was headed straight for Rome on the basis of his justification of the Roman system as the steady growth of the life of Christianity from the very earliest history of the Church plus his extremely critical attitude toward reigning American Protestantism. The question of whether or not he steered a middle course between Puritanism and the sects and Rome, as he said he would in the first volume of the Mercersburg Review, we shall examine later.

Nevin's theology while receiving general approbation by his brethren in the German Reformed Church, had also a divisive effect. The issues between Berg and Nevin were never resolved. Berg left the German Reformed Church in 1852 and entered the

Dutch Reformed Church. The straw which broke the camel's back for him was evidently the decision of the Synod of 1851 to refuse to accept Nevin's resignation as professor at Mercersburg. The _Messenger_ remarked editorially that this was a happy decision in view of the fact that the impression had been given in "some circles" that the resignation had been forced on Nevin by dissatisfaction in the church with regard to his theological views. The vote of Synod would appear to indicate that with the exception of J. F. Berg, Jacob Helfenstein and several of their supporters Nevin had the support of the Church behind him, at least to the extent of allowing him the largest possible opportunity to express his views. Further evidence of this support was his subsequent call to the presidency of Franklin and Marshall College. Helfenstein also left the church and took his congregation and Church property at Germantown into the Presbyterian Church.

The Triennial Convention of the German and Dutch Reformed Churches came to an unhappy end largely through antagonisms which developed when the _Christian Intelligencer_ of the Dutch Church not only openly criticized the views of the professors at Mercersburg but also opened its pages to the dissident element in the German Church to air views which the _Messenger_ had refused to print.

Nevin who had at first been hopeful that the convention would be a salutary example of "Protestant Catholicity" for the other Protestant groups had come to see that it probably could not issue in any solid and permanent advantage to this cause. With all their ecclesiastical affinity the two churches were not prepared to unite. Both held to the Heidelberg Catechism, but the Dutch Church in America had allowed itself to be influenced by "Puritan forms of thinking" and by the considerable number of Scotchmen it had allowed to enter its ministry. These factors, Nevin said, had exerted an unfortunate modifying influence on its theology. The German Church, not without difficulty, had remained true to the "genius of her own historical life," and was determined to be ". . . German, and not Puritan; Catholic, as well as Protestant; historical, no less than biblical; bound, and at the same time free . . ."[87] The Dutch and German churches could still walk happily together if full allowance were made on each side for the distinctive character of the other, but he doubted that present circumstances would allow this. The German Church could not sacrifice its own nature and divorce itself from the rich church life of Germany to retain the loose union with the Dutch.

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[87] Editorial, "Triennial Convention," Weekly Messenger (August 25, 1847), p. 2487.

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

It was Nevin's contention that American Protestant Christianity had largely lost sight of the nature of the Church as an objective reality, a supernatural fact involving a history, and bearing within it the means of grace necessary to man's salvation. He would agree with the doctrine that outside the Church there is no salvation. He had decisively rejected the pietistic-revivalistic tradition and had aligned himself squarely with the right wing, classical side of the Reformation, which, Nevin contended, embodied a spirit and theology radically different from those of the noisy sects and of Puritanism which he believed had affinity for Rationalistic modes of thought.

In this chapter we propose to show how Nevin developed his doctrine of the Church as an historical, objective, supernatural life-bearing institution and grounded it in the doctrine of the Incarnation. To do this he felt it necessary to re-examine and re-interpret the doctrines of the nature of man and of Christ, and of man's relationship both to Adam and Christ. In so doing he utilized a psychological framework distinguished by its emphasis on the organic character of life and of man's nature as generic.

Christianity was for Nevin a new order of life in the world starting in the person of Jesus Christ himself.[1] The Church is the living revelation and continuation of his presence and power from age to age in the world.

> For Christianity . . . is in a deep sense identical with the life of Christ himself. It is not the words he spoke, nor the works he wrought, as something sundered from his own person, but the living fountain of all these as introduced into the world in the mystery from which his person springs. . . . Christianity unfolds itself into a whole world of divine realities (doctrines, promises and deeds) to the eyes of angels glorious to behold; but the inward substance of all this new creation holds continually in the mystery of the incarnation. It is no abstraction, no thing primarily of thought or notion; but a divine, supernatural reality, brought into the world, revealed, made accessible for men through faith, and this the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and in whom only life and immortality are brought to light. All this comes to apprehension first, and has its true reality thus, only as Christ himself is apprehended in the spirit and power of Peter's memorable confession.[2]

Any attempt therefore to construct a sound theory of Christianity and of the Church must begin with a sound Christology. The question of what Nevin understood to be the nature of man, the character of the incarnation, how Christ's person and work is to be understood as having saving significance for man, and of how his life is a continuing historical fact in the Church is our concern at this point. The great central fact regarding the person of Christ, says Nevin, is the proclamation which John uses to introduce his gospel, "The Word became flesh." In Jesus Christ the everlasting Word or Logos became flesh, that is, assumed humanity into union with itself.

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[1] J. W. Nevin, "True and False Protestantism," _Mercersburg Review_, I (1849), 89.

[2] J. W. Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed," _Mercersburg Review_, I (1849), 212-13.

> By the hypostatical union of two natures in the person of Jesus Christ, our humanity as fallen in Adam was exalted again to a new and imperishable and divine life.[3]

Since Jesus Christ is a union of the Logos with man's nature, and since this union is basic to God's design in creation, and for redemption, it is important to ascertain what Nevin believed about man.

Basic to Nevin's psychology of man is his contention that man is an organic unit. The human body is composed of two elements; first, the "organic law which constitutes the proper identity of the human body," and second, "the material volume it is found to embrace as exhibited to the senses." As a mere law the first element can have no real existence. And similarly the material volume apart from the law of life can have no real existence; it is merely a sandheap, an assortment of material particles. Only as matter is filled with the form of life, that is, the organic law of life, can it be said to be a body.

In his discussion of the mystical union between Christ and the believer Nevin says that much of the difficulty which arises with regard to this subject comes from the prejudice by which human life is split by the imagination into two lives, thus introducing a dualism in place of the absolute unity. The Bible knows nothing of such an abstract separation of soul and body. We have no right, says Nevin, to think of the body as the prison of the soul nor as its shell or hull in the manner of Plato. Body and soul form one life.

> The soul to be complete to develop itself at all as a soul, must externalize itself, throw itself out in space; and this

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[3] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 165.

> externalization is the body. All is one process, the action of one and the same living organic principle, dividing itself only that its unity may become thus the more free and intensely complete.[4]

Living things are the combination of a principle or law of life and the concrete material substance which gives it real existence. In any living thing the two are indissolubly bound together; they mutually interpenetrate each other at all points. The organic life principle in man is the soul. It is this which differentiates him from the lower forms of existence. Soul and body form one life. When a man feels, thinks, wills, or worships the whole man is involved.

Nevin's psychology of man, which was undoubtedly influenced by the work of Augustus Rauch, was for Nevin the corrective of the "faculty psychology" which was in vogue during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This psychology concerned itself with the soul in its various activities. The central doctrine of faculty psychology said that there are definite or distinct faculties or capacities of the soul--memory, reason and will--and that the soul uses successively its different faculties. It classified mental performances into groups and explained each in terms of the mental power or faculty assumed to correspond to these groups. The faculty of reason, for example, explains man's ability to make judgments and draw inferences. Faculty psychology also emphasized the reality and value of mental processes which appear to be, at least relatively, remote from or independent of physical processes. Rauch held that rather than being independent of the body and bodily senses, the soul has its ground and origin in them. In a review of Rauch's "Psychology" in 1840 Nevin says Rauch combines German and Scotch modes of thought. The groundwork of Rauch's system is in the Lockean school, since "it is by means of the bodily senses only that the soul begins to sprout, and begins its mysterious way towards the ethereal perfection which it is found in the end to assume."[5] The German School, however, sees self-consciousness as forming the ultimate ground of human personality. Ziegler has shown in his study of Rauch that he follows Hegel here in his concept of the opposition of pure Idea, on the one hand, and the irrationality of nature, on the other hand, which comes to an end in the actualization of reason in man.[6] Hence Rauch sees the soul as the peak of the developmental process which begins in the bodily senses but which rises to ever higher activity from the senses to attention and conception, to fancy and imagination, and finally to pure thinking in the form of understanding, judgment, reason and will. The soul itself is a transfiguration, so to speak, of the body and they are organically one. Though organically one with nature in which his life has its roots, says Nevin, man ascends from this rootage into a higher sphere to become complete in ". . . the form of self-conscious, self-active spirit."[7] In distinction from mere nature, ruled by a force beyond itself, man becomes the subject of intelligence and will. The actual, or nature, is fused with the ideal, or spirit, as the proper form of his being. Body and soul are an organic unity.

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[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 171-72.

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[5] J. W. Nevin, "Rauch's Psychology," Weekly Messenger (June 10, 1840), p. 977.

[6] H. J. B. Ziegler, Frederick August Rauch, American Hegelian, (Lancaster, 1953), pp. 48-49.

[7] J. W. Nevin, "Human Freedom," Mercersburg Review, II (1850), 5.

Further, says Nevin, Rauch rejects the old belief that the mind is a multitude of faculties, as of Reid and Stewart of the Scottish School, or yet a single identical activity, as of Brown and the latter shcool. The mind is one always and yet manifold. The mind develops itself through a succession of faculties, the higher still infolded in the lower, always becoming different as it expands and reaches toward heaven, yet always substantially the same.

This point of view becomes basic to Nevin's thought. In "Faith,Reverence, and Freedom" which appeared in the Mercersburg Review, Nevin says, man represents a combination of polar forces. He is a child of nature but his reason and will spring not from the world of sense. They derive from a higher sphere of existence which sense has no power to apprehend or penetrate. At the same time, these higher powers are so wedded to matter and sense in human nature that they cannot unfold themselves at all without this union. The harmony and perfection of our nature demands not the destruction of nature within man, nor yet the violent divorce of nature and spirit, but the unity of a true marriage of nature and spirit.

This psychology of man which sees man as an organic unity of the higher order of spirit with the lower order of nature, an organic unity of body and soul, becomes the basis of Nevin's whole Christology since, as we shall see, he interprets the person of Christ as the summit or consummation of the whole creative process in which man is the completion of nature and Christ is the completion of man in a process which begins in nature and rises through successively higher orders of existence toward the end which it had aimed at from the beginning, namely, the union of the divine and human in Christ. This psychology is important also for the understanding of faith. For faith is that capacity which human nature by virtue of its orientation to the world of spirit carries in itself for perceiving and apprehending spiritual things, the reality of the higher world to which it is oriented in one direction, as sense is the organ through which man stands related to and apprehends things which are seen and temporal. Nevin's psychology is in part also the basis of his respect for history as ". . . the divine anthropogany by which the universal life of man, in the form of reason and will is moving forward always to its grand completion. Man's life and its consummation is inseparably connected with the flow of time which reveals the divine purpose."[8]

Nevin's organic psychology also cleared the way for his reinterpretation of the nature of the christian life as a life union with Christ, body and soul; for his doctrine of the Church as the extension of the incarnation; and for his doctrine of the sacraments which, as we shall see, asserted that the whole person of the believer can communicate in the Lord's Supper with the whole person of Christ, including his body, even though Christ's glorified body is now at the right hand of God. The functioning of any part of the human organism, Nevin holds, is a function of the whole; therefore, as Christ is present in the Church by his Spirit, he is present in his entire person, and those who are in union with him through the Church are united to his entire person.

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[8] J. W. Nevin, "Faith, Reverence and Freedom," Mercersburg Review, II (1850), 109.

Man as a unity of soul and body is to be seen further under a two-fold character. He is to be understood in his identity as an individual, unitary person, but he is also to be seen in his generic or general human nature.

> Every man comprehends in himself a life, which is at once both single and general, the life of his own person separately considered, and the life at the same time of the race to which he belongs. He is a man; the universal conception of humanity enters into him, as it enters also into all other men; while he is besides this or that man, as distinguished from all others by his particular position in the human world. . . . His completeness as an individual involves of itself his comprehension in a life more general than his own.[9]

In his generic nature he is a part of the race present in Adam and stemming from his life. As such he shares in the fallen nature of Adam. Adam's fall was the fall of the race not simply because he represented the race but because the race was comprehended in his person. As sharing in this nature, man shares in it primarily as fallen nature, spiritually impotent nature.

Before Adam sinned he lived under the principle of "life and health." After Adam sinned he lived under the principle of "sin and death." This law is at work in every man from birth. It is passed on to man from Adam not simply in the way of transfer by divine decree, as Covenant theology held, but by being at the very center of man's nature as inherited from Adam.

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[9] Nevin, "Human Freedom."

> The ruin under which we lie is an organic ruin; the ruin of our nature; universal and whole, not simply because all men are sinners, but as making all men to be sinners. Men do not make their natures; their natures make them. . . . Men have been one before they became many, and as many, they are still one. We have a perfect right then to say that Adam's sin is imputed to all his posterity. . . . They are born into Adam's nature, and for this reason only, as forming with him the same general life, they are born also into his guilt.[10]

Thus to the organic unity of the individual person, Nevin adds the organic unity of the race, a race which is the power of a single life and which shares the law of that life as fallen. It is passed on, transmitted by ordinary generation from one age onward to another. This is not to be interpreted as a passing along of the material particles of Adam's body, but as the passing of the law of Adam's life. Where this law works, Adam's life is reproduced body and soul.

Nevin was in sharp disagreement also with any who would follow the Pelagian view that man sins because of the bad example set by Adam. Man sins because he is organically related to Adam. The principle of "sin and death" is lodged at the very center of his being. This does not mean, however, that man is totally depraved. He is capable of exercising faith, of moving in obedience to and of surrendering spontaneously to the life which comes to him from Christ by the power of the Spirit. The human world, in its present state, as descended from Adam, is sundered from its proper life in God by sin, and is utterly disabled in this character for rising by itself to any higher position. Man can do nothing to change his nature at its center, but he can respond in faith to the new life in Christ.

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[10] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 164.

> This is faith; the most comprehensive, fundamental act of which our nature is capable. The man swings himself, in the totality of his being, quite off the center of self, on which hitherto his consciousness has been poised, over upon Christ, now revealed to his view as another center altogether.[11]

So when Nevin talks about human nature, he means the nature of man as an inseparable unity of body and soul, an organic unit; a nature generically one with Adam with whom it shares the power of a common life principle as fallen, the principle of sin and death.

Jesus Christ is the theanthropic man, the union of the divine Logos and of human nature as fallen and under the law of sin and death. Nevin wants to make it clear that the life of Christ was a divine life. The Word that existed eternally with the Father, that created the world, that had illuminated all the prophets, now in the person of Jesus became flesh. This is clearly the doctrine of John's gospel, and the Epistles of John, the latter making it the mark of Antichrist to call in question the fact that Christ was the Son of God who took on himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance, and born of her, yet without sin.

He is equally emphatic that Christ's life was a human life. Christ is

> . . . the life of the Word made flesh, the divinity joined in personal union with our humanity. It was not in the way of show merely that Christ put on our nature; as many of the old Gnostics believed, and as the view that multitudes still have of the Christian salvation, would seem to imply. He put it on truly and in the fullest sense. He was Man more perfectly

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[11] _Ibid._, p. 176.

> than this could be said of Adam himself, even before he fell; humanity stood in his person under its most perfect form. Not a new humanity wholly dissevered from that of Adam; but the humanity of Adam itself, only raised to a higher character, and filled with new meaning and power with the divine nature.[12]

In the series on the Apostles' Creed Nevin says that the mystery of the Incarnation has two sides. The first side which the Creed affirms is that the incarnation apprehends the presence of a truly divine life, the entrance of God into the world as he had not been in it before. The second side is the true human and historical character of all this revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth whose miraculous conception resulted in a natural birth.[13]

The union of the divine and human in Christ was not a *fait accompli* with his miraculous conception or natural birth. These opened the way, says Nevin, for the gradual assumption of our humanity by the Son of God. The incarnation has a progressive character. Human life accomplishes itself only in the way of historical process and growth, and the assumption of our humanity by the Logos has to agree with this "general law of existence in time." The incarnation resolves itself into

> . . . a series of events, a living historical process rather, by which the mystery enters more intimately and deeply always into the drama of the world's life; till finally it becomes complete, and is found to have its perfect work, where "Jesus is glorified" and the windows of heaven were opened thus (John vii.39) for the power of his Spirit to descend in full measure upon the earth.[14]

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[13] Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed," pp. 323-324.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

So in the Creed the fact comprised in Christ's person is drawn out in a succession of historical points which mark and define its progress from his birth to God's right hand. The full assumption of humanity by Christ included his whole existence in the world through the baptism, temptation, trial before Pilate, his death and burial. Even the descent into Hades was indispensable to complete obedience to the law of mortality involved in the human nature with which the Logos united itself. The Incarnation was a "living process" and it becomes complete finally and only in the Church.

Nevin reiterates this view in his review of Wilberforce's work on the incarnation published in 1850, in which he finds support for his doctrine. He says that in Christ was a new order of life which was not in the world before,

> . . . the Word made flesh, God and man brought into living union in the person of Jesus Christ.[15]

His mission, however, was not fulfilled by the hypostatical union.

> His Mediatorship involved a history, a work, the execution of prophetical, priestly and kingly office, a life of suffering and trial, the atonement, the resurrection, the sitting at the right hand of God, from whence he shall come to judge the world; but all this only as the proper and necessary result of the first mystery itself, the entrance of the divine Word in a living way into the sphere of our fallen Humanity. . . . Forth from this sublime Fact proceeds the presence of the Holy Ghost, the power of a new creation in the world, the mystery of the Church, one, holy, and catholic, and the whole process of salvation from the remission of sins in baptism on to the resurrection of the last day.[16]

Nevin thus sees the incarnation as a movement in history from Christ's conception to the final consummation of all things. It is the Logos indissolubly bound to human nature, taking into itself more and more of the world's life.

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[15] J. W. Nevin, "Wilberforce on the Incarnation," Mercersburg Review, II (1850), 172.

[16] Ibid.

Christ's life as a union of the Logos with human nature is to be seen under two aspects, namely, the individual, personal life of Christ, and the same life in a generic view. Nevin approaches this distinction by way of analogy of the life of Christ with the life of Adam. As we have seen, the first man Adam is to be understood under a twofold character. In one sense Adam was "a man" the first and one among many men since born. In another sense he is "the man" who included in his person the whole human race.

> His individual personality of course was limited wholly to himself. But a whole world of like personalities lay involved in his life, at the same time, as a generic principle or root. And all these, in a deep sense, form at last but one and the same life. Adam lives in his posterity, as truly as he ever lived in his own person. They participate of his whole nature, soul, and body, and are truly bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.[17]

The same distinction holds with regard to the person of Christ. One way of looking at Christ is to see him simply as "a man," like Adam one of the many men born into the world. But more important, he is to be seen as "the man," the generic head of a new humanity.

> In one view the Saviour is a man, Jesus of Nazareth, partaking of the same flesh and blood with other men, though joined in mysterious union with the everlasting Word. But in another view he is again the man; in a higher sense than this could be said of Adam; emphatically the Son of Man, in whose person stood revealed the true idea of humanity, under its ultimate and most comprehensive form.[18]

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[17] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 161. [18] Ibid.

In Christ the sense and power of man's life, universally considered, is revealed. The incarnation is no isolated portent or prodigy but a "fact that holds in strict organic and historical continuity and unity with the life of the human world as a whole."[19] The person of Christ as the Mediator is of universal significance and force. So the Scriptures teach when they call him the Second Adam. His Humanity is the repository and medium for his communication with the rest of the race.

In the generic view, as "the man," Christ introduced a "new Life" into the very center of humanity itself. Leaving the implications of this "new Life" for humanity for the moment, we inquire, at this point, what Nevin meant by a "new Life" or by his statement "Christ is the principle of a new creation." The answer requires that we see Christ in a historical perspective with regard to nature and the universe, and with regard to religious systems which antedate him.

The new creation, says Nevin, involves the old creation and is the key to its meaning and to the true meaning of the universe. Christ stands in relation both to nature and revelation as "the great central fact of the world."

> All nature and all previous history unite to form one grand, universal prophecy of his presence. All become significant and complete at last, only in his person.[20]

Nature, he contends, presents the picture of "lower forms of existence" giving way to successively higher forms--from the inorganic to the organic, from plant to animal--each improving on the other, with the climax being reached in man who is the completion and fulfillment of the whole process. Through the medium of human intelligence nature became intelligible, complete, and an organic whole.

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[19] Nevin, "Wilberforce on the Incarnation," pp. 174-75.

[20] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, pp. 199-200.

Now Christ is to man what man is to nature, namely, the completion or fulfillment of mankind's reaching after a higher form of existence, ". . . after a true and real union with the nature of God, as the necessary complement and consummation of its own life."[21] Humanity becomes complete in the incarnation.

> Christ is the true ideal Man. . . . Man finds himself in God, and wakes to the full sense of his own being, in being enabled thus to fall back, in a full, free way on the absolute ground of his life. The only medium of such inward, living communication with the divine nature, is the mystery of the incarnation as exhibited in the man Christ Jesus.[22]

The incarnation as exhibited in Christ is God's last, greatest work of which all nature is one "vast prophecy."

History also is one vast prophecy of the incarnation. Nevin believes that man always looked for a union of human nature with the divine nature that it might be complete. The introduction of sin made this necessity for union with the divine a necessity also for redemption. From the fall onward the development of this need was the great burden of all history. The pagan religions of the orient and the west--ancient and contemporary--

> All prophecy of Christ; for all proclaim the inmost want of humanity to be a true union with God, and their character is determined simply by the form in which it is attempted in each case to bring this great life problem to its proper resolution.[23]

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[21] Ibid., pp. 200-201.

[22] Ibid., p. 201.

[23] Ibid., p. 203.

But all these attempts ended in an insurmountable dualism, an impassible gulf still dividing the nature of man from the nature of God. They prepared the way for Christ in a negative sense.

Judaism from the beginning had respect to the coming of Christ in a positive way. In the Old Testament God descends toward man in more and more significant and encouraging condescensions. He speaks to man in the Old Testament in many ways, but the wall of partition between the divine and the human was never fully broken down. The revelation was a revelation of God to man rather than a revelation of God in man, the only form in which it was possible for him to become truly known. Christ was God revealed in man.

Thus the incarnation is in continuity with the unfolding character of nature and revelation, "in close connection with the order of the world as it existed before."

> Here thus . . . we reach the central Fact, at once ultimate and primal, in the constitution of the world. . . . The incarnation, by which divinity and humanity are joined together, are made one, in a real, inward and abiding way, is found to be the scope of all God's counsels and dispositions in the world. The mystery of the universe is interpreted in the person of Jesus Christ.[24]

Nevin appears to be saying that the Incarnation, the union of God and man, was always in the mind of God as the peak of the creative process. If we understand Nevin correctly this would mean that he had abandoned the Calvinistic doctrine that the Fall was ordained by God. Nevin's doctrine could leave room for the view that God foresaw the Fall of man, and that therefore God's last great revelation of himself in man, his supreme creation of the person of the theanthropic Christ, was also turned into an instrument of man's redemption. So while Jesus Christ is the end, the complement and consummation of all previous history, he is the principle also of a new creation in which the old is required to pass away.

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

What does Nevin mean by the affirmation, "Christ is the principle of a new creation?" When the gospels declare "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" a great deal more is meant than the occurrence of an event in the way of the regular historical development of the old order of the world, though it was certainly in continuity with it. The incarnation was a work of God fully comparable to the work by which he, in the beginning, created the worlds. One gets the feeling that Nevin adds another day to the original six days of creation, a day far separated in time from the sixth day when God created man, but nonetheless a continuation of the process by which God in the beginning brought into being successively higher orders of creation.

> As the formation of man on the sixth day, was necessary to perfect in a higher sphere the organization already called into being in the lower; . . . so in the end, to crown all with a still higher perfection, the Word itself, by which the heavens and earth were created before, became permanently joined with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, as the principle of a new earth and new heavens--the continuation and necessary complement of the previous organization, but in no sense again its historical product or birth.[25]

Here was introduced into the world a new fact.

> . . . in the person of Christ, all is different. The supernatural is brought not only near to nature, but into its very

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[25] *Ibid*., p. 207.

> heart; not as a transient wonder, but to remain in unity with it forever. The everlasting Word, in a way wholly unknown before, descends into the actual process of human history, and becomes within it the principle or law of a second creation immeasurably more glorious than the first.[26]

Nevin affirms that he is not now identifying God with nature and history in a pantheistic sense. Nor is he saying that the new creation is a moral one, consisting in a new order of thought and character on the part of man. The incarnation is rather,

> . . . the introduction, literally and strictly, of a new element, a divine force, into the very organism of the world itself.[27]

For this reason Nevin ascribes to Christianity the character of "absolute reality and truth." Nature and man, in whom nature finds its meaning, are both only "relatively true and real." The relativity of the pre-incarnation order is well illustrated by the religion of the Old Testament which was altogether of God. But not only were its types and ceremonies "as a shadow to the substance it represents"; so was its whole constitution, moral as well as ceremonial. Its truth was relative only to the truth to which it pointed, the union of the divine and human in Christ, the absolute revelation of God in man rather than a revelation of God to man. Its sacraments were types only, and not counterparts of the sacraments of the New Testament.

The great argument for the truth of Christianity, is the person

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[26] Ibid., pp. 206-07.

[27] Ibid., p. 207.

> of Jesus himself, as exhibited to us in the faith of the Church. The incarnation is the Fact of all facts, that may be said to authenticate all truth in the world besides. The first miracle, and the only miracle, we may say, of Christianity, is the new creation in which it starts.[28]

Now since the world centers in man, and since the world finds its completion and comes to consciousness in man, it follows, says Nevin, that for Christ to be the principle of a new creation he must be incorporated with the inmost life of humanity.

> To descend into the world at all then, so as to become united to its constitution as a principle of organic renovation, it was necessary that the Word should become flesh. The new creation reveals itself in man. Christ is the second Adam.[29]

Here Nevin returns to his insistence upon the two natures which formed in Christ one, indivisible person. His manhood was real, not an illusion or a transient phenomenon. While the nature which Christ took upon him was in all respects the nature of Adam, he was not, however, simply a descendant of Adam, one more of his sons.

The distinction between the individual man and the generic man which was basic to Nevin's psychology comes in play here as he seeks to make clear in what sense Christ is to be understood to combine in his person the nature of man. As the principle of a new order of existence, we are to view Christ not simply in terms of the man Jesus, one might say the Jesus of history, but in terms of the Word having taken on flesh, or humanity, in its general or generic character. Christ gathered humanity into himself as a whole, and was thus constituted its head, in a more full and comprehensive sense than this could ever be said of Adam.

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[28] Ibid., pp. 208-09. [29] Ibid., p. 210.

Nevin finds support for his position in what he calls Paul's "representation of this federal or generic character on the part of Christ." Adam is the head of the race in its fallen character, the federal head because the true organic head. Paul contends, says Nevin, that all men were constituted sinners in Adam's first act of disobedience. As all men were made sinners in their organic head, so one man Christ makes them righteous. The imputation of sin to man by Adam and of righteousness by Christ is not in any outward or legal way, but by virtue of the fact that each was the generic head of the race according to the order of creation which stemmed from him.

The concept of Christ's nature as generic, that is the incarnation as the revelation of the true idea of humanity, is one which Nevin evidently picked up from the "mediating school" of the newer German theology. It held that the union of the divine and human in Christ was necessary for the completion of man himself in his general universal nature.

Nevin acknowledges his indebtedness for certain of his ideas to the theologians of the "mediating school" of contemporary German Lutherans. He makes fleeting references to them in the second edition of The Anxious Bench, in The Mystical Presence and in his preface to Antichrist which have significance as indicating the influences they exerted on various facets of his thinking. Sartorius' lectures on The Person and Work of Christ first published in the early 1830's was Christocentric and advanced ". . . the doctrine of the God-man, of the union of divinity and humanity in him, and the reconciliation of both through him. . . ."[30]

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[30] J.W. Nevin, "Sartorius on the Person and Work of Christ," Mercersburg Review, I (March, 1849), 149.

The same work influenced Nevin's thought on the concept of organic participation in Adam's sin and the new creation in Christ. Sartorius, says Nevin, taught a true organic unity of the two natures in Christ, and maintained that it is only in virtue of the fact that Christ is the head of our human life that it becomes possible for the race beyond him to partake also of his divine nature. For Sartorius also the sacraments are means of grace having force only within the Church. They convey the power of Christ's divine-human life.

Nevin acknowledges his indebtedness also to Olshausen for the concept of Christ as "the man," "that is, as realizing the absolute idea of humanity, and thus carrying it in himself potentially in the way of the spirit, as Adam did in a corporeal way," fulfilling in himself the conditions of righteousness and holiness so that the believer receives them in germ along with the Spirit of Christ.[31] Here again is the concept of organic participation in Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness, as well as the concept of Christ's nature as generic. As the whole human race, naturally considered, lay in Adam and all history is but the development of what his nature included, so, says Olshausen, Christ as the second Adam is the bearer of the Church, the new creation, who not only destroys the old but also creates the new and forms his own sacred image in every believing soul.

In Rothe he found emphasis on the centrality of the historical Christ in terms of the Incarnation, and he cites Rothe's work on the early church as an example of an impetus to sound church feeling although he disagrees with Rothe's thesis that Catholicism and Protestantism would both be superseded by a new order of Christian life in the form of the state.

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[31] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, footnote, p. 211.

It was from the "mediating school" that Nevin picked up the idea of Christ's generic nature. According to this concept Christ is "the man," the end of all God's counsels. The Incarnation was always in God's mind as the force by which the world is carried forward to its absolute end, namely, the full harmony of nature, humanity and God. This view of the Incarnation was opposed to the idea, which Nevin says was taught at Princeton, that the chief purpose of Christ's Incarnation was that it made his death possible, that since he must suffer to atone for man's sin he must have a body to suffer, which he could not do as God. The Incarnation was made necessary by man's sin. The generic view of the Incarnation, on the contrary, held "that the Son of God would equally have taken man's nature, though, of course under very different conditions, even if he had not fallen, that it lay in the everlasting purposes of God quite irrespective of the fall, that the stem and stalk of humanity should at length bear its perfect flower in Him, who should thus at once be its root and crown."[32] However, the Incarnation was also turned into a necessity for the atonement as the result of man's fall. This view, says Nevin, was taught by Dorner, and developed by Liebner as the foundation of his work on Christology published in 1849. This concept of Christ's nature as generic combined with organic psychology was for Nevin the corrective of the dualistic psychology of reigning American Protestantism which asserted a union of divinity and humanity in Christ only on the basis of a need for redemption, but which separated the two natures and made the redemption to hold only in Christ's nature as divine.

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[32] Quoted from Trench's Hulsean Lectures for 1845, 1846 in J. W. Nevin, "Cur Deus Homo," Mercersburg Review (May, 1851), p. 220.

Though it made no difference in Nevin's Christology so far as one can see in the period in which we are interested, he must have had some qualms about the tenability of Christ's nature as generic after his review in 1851 of several articles by Julius Muller.[33] Muller's articles examined the question as to whether the Son of God would have become man if the human race had continued without sin. Muller rejects the premise that the necessity of the Incarnation lies primarily in some necessity in the original creation which made the Incarnation necessary for its completion. Muller refuses to acknowledge any reason for the Incarnation beyond the existence of sin and the need for redemption. If the first Adam had not fallen there would have been no necessity for a second Adam. Muller holds that the Bible, the orthodox fathers, the schoolmen of the middle ages and the reformers all refer the Incarnation to sin and the necessity of redemption. Other considerations militate against the generic view. We need not follow all Muller's arguments, but as a sample he raises the question of why, in the generic view, the Incarnation did not take place at the beginning of man's history rather than at a later time. He replies that the only intelligible answer is that sin must ripen, and humanity must show what it is able to do of itself after the Fall, before the Son of God could appear as the author of redemption and the dispenser of a higher life. Nevin noted that what Muller has to say on this subject is not to be taken lightly in view both of his extensive learning and profound thought. But this was in 1851 and when he wrote The Mystical Presence he shows the influence of the Christocentrism of Dorner, Olshausen, Tholuck and other theologians of the Lutheran Church in Germany as they grappled with the Christological problem set at the heart of theology by Schleiermacher.

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[33] See "Cur Deus Homo" for discussion of Muller.

Nevin holds therefore that in Christ the universal sense of man's life comes to completion, and that the Incarnation would have occurred of necessity, even if man had not fallen into sin. The fall of man made the Incarnation also a necessity for redemption. The redemptive work of Christ, therefore, takes place within human nature as it rises to its completion in Christ whose life, apprehending both the divine and human natures in their general or universal character, introduces a new genus or order of existence into the world. The atonement is then integrally bound up with human nature in Christ and becomes immanent to human nature in its general character.

Since in Adam the whole race became corrupt at its very center, Nevin contends that in order for the race to be saved,

> . . . it was necessary that a work should be wrought not beyond it, but in it; and that this universal salvation to be effective must lay hold of the race itself in its organic, universal character, before it could extend to individuals, since in no other form was it possible for

> it to cover fully the breadth and depth of the ruin that lay in its way.[34]

Nevin was insistent that the work of salvation must be wrought for the entire race, for humanity in its universal or generic character; and that the work must be wrought within the race and thus be immanent to it, rather than outside the race and then applied to its subsequently in the way of "outward imputation" as Covenant theology taught. Man's nature, in the generic sense, being fallen, being under the dominance of the law of sin and death must have introduced into its center a new principle, or law, literally a new Life which has the capacity to overcome and eventually to replace the old.

> Such an inward salvation of the race required that it should be joined in a living way with the divine nature itself as represented by the everlasting Word or Logos. . . . The Word accordingly became flesh, that is assumed humanity into Union with itself. . . . The object of the incarnation was to couple the human nature in real union with the Logos, as a permanent source of life.[35]

Why was not the incarnation itself sufficient to the salvation of man, the mere fact that humanity was joined to divinity? Why was it necessary for Christ to suffer? The answer, says Nevin, lies in the presence of sin in the human nature with which the Logos united itself.

> As the bearer of a fallen humanity he must descend with it to the lowest depths of sorrow and pain, in order that he might triumph with it again in the power of his own imperishable life. . . . The assumption of humanity on the part of the Logos involved the necessity of suffering, as the only way in which the new life with which it was thus joined could triumph over the law of sin and death it was called to

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[34] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 165.

[35] Ibid.

> surmount. . . . The passion of the Son of God was the world's spiritual crisis, in which the principle of health came to its last struggle with the principle of disease, and burst forth from the very bosom of the grave itself in the form of immortality. This was the atonement, Christ's victory over sin and hell. As such it forms the only medium of salvation to men. . . . When Christ died and rose, humanity died and rose at the same time in his person; not figuratively, but truly; just as it had fallen before in the person of Adam.[36]

That is, Christ met head on man's two enemies, sin and death, and in his person and through his suffering, death and resurrection destroyed their power. The atonement is not a device for satisfying the justice of God, but a battle with and ultimate victory over the disease at the heart of man's nature, the dominance of the law of sin and death. The old law was supplanted by a new law of life and health in the very heart of human nature as it resided in Christ.

Here Nevin explains what he means by the fact that no work of atonement could be wrought outside the race and applied to it in "the way of outward imputation." No act of imputation can reckon to us as ours what is not ours in fact. The sin of Adam is not ours as an evil foreign to our nature and arbitrarily set over to our account. Neither could the atonement as a foreign work be arbitrarily set over to our account. Only as it may be considered immanent to our nature itself can it be imputed to us as ours and become available to us with all its benefits.

This is why Nevin is so insistent that Christ's life was in every respect a human life. The work of atonement eventuating in the new Life must be accomplished within, not outside of, the framework of human nature; the life of Christ must participate therefore in the life of humanity, so as to "change the general substance of humanity out of which the individual life is found to spring."[37]

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Nevin says he cannot understand why any should object to this interpretation.

> Strange that any who hold to the Augustinian view of Adam's organic union with his posterity as the only basis that can properly support the doctrine of original sin, should not feel the necessity of a like organic union with Christ, as the indispensable condition of an interest in his salvation.[38]

This jibe is directed aginst those who tend to regard the Fall and justification as an "extra-human event." Nevin asserts that the "mediation of Christ" holds fundamentally in the constitution of his person. New England Puritan theology does not admit this. It looks on Christ's mediatorial office as an "outward investiture" for which Christ had to have certain qualifications, like the work assigned to Moses. Man and God are in a state of variance and need reconciliation. Christ is regarded as assuming the role of arbitrator, bringing the two together. The more orthodox view allows him to be a Saviour, possessed of divine powers by the mystery of the incarnation, who takes away the sin of the world by suffering the penalty for it in his own person. In the Unitarian sense he may be a prophet who does this by his excellent doctrine and holy example. However, this view sees Christ as the doer standing on the outside of the transaction in the character of an instrument or servant to his own work.

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[37] J. W. Nevin, "Catholicism," Mercersburg Review, II (1851), 10.

[38] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 212.

On the contrary, says Nevin, the "mediation of Christ" holds primarily and fundamentally in his person. His incarnation is not a device in order to his mediation; he is the "Mediatorial Fact." The mediation consists in his actually "binding the nature of God and the nature of man into one life in his own person."[39]

The Word that became flesh was not a single life only but humanity in its universal aspect. And the atonement was accomplished within the framework of a "true Human Life." Nevin asks,

> How else could he be the principle of a general life, the origin of a new order of existence for the human world as such? How else could the value of his mediatorial work be made over to us in a real way, by a true imputation, and not a legal fiction only?[40]

The victory over sin and death by the theanthropic Christ introduces a "new Life" into the very center of humanity itself. The supernatural linked to the flow of the world's life becomes itself the ground and principle of the entire organism now poised at last on its true center and with the principle of life and health immanent to its very nature.

The new life of Christ, as divine and human and as victorious over sin and death, does not remain with his separate person, says Nevin, but passes over to his people through the Church which is his body. This takes place by an organic, not a mechanical process. Christ, in the way of "history, growth, regular living development" gathers the world into his own person and makes the law of his own life to be its root. Thus the incarnation is progressive in history, incorporating into its life more and more of that human nature to which the Logos first joined itself.

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[39] Nevin, "Wilberforce on the Incarnation," p. 171.

[40] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, pp. 210-11.

The great difficulty here, says Nevin, is "in rising to a full, abiding sense of the truth and reality of Christianity itself, as a supernatural constitution permanently established under this character in the world."[41] We are too prone to limit the idea of supernatural interposition in history to the single historical person of Christ. We must not do this because the supernatural in Christ continues its interposition in history through the medium of the Church.

> We must not sunder the supernatural in Christ, from the life of his body which is in the Church. Christianity is strictly and truly a new creation in Christ Jesus; a supernatural order of life, revealed and made constant and abiding, in the midst of the course of nature as it stood before. As such, it includes resources, powers, divine realities, not only peculiar to itself, but altoghether transcending the common natural constitution of human life. All this, at the same time, under a true historical form. The supernatural has become itself natural; not in the way however of putting off its own distinction, as compared with what nature had been before, and still is under any other view; but by falling into the regular process of the world's history, so as to form to the end of time its true central stream. . . . The supernatural, as thus made permanent and historical in the Church, must, in the nature of the case, correspond with the form of the supernatural, as it appeared originally in Christ himself. For it is all one and the same life and constitution. The Church must have a true theanthropic character throughout. The union of the divine and human in her constitution, must be inward and real, a continuous

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[41] Ibid., p. 246.

> revelation of God in the flesh, exalting this last continuously into the sphere of the Spirit.[42]

The true church is thus historical and visible. It is not the invisible church of Federal theology, entrance into which is through the visible church. The regeneration which it offers is not accomplished through religious instruction furnishing new impulses and motives for the will. It is accomplished via life union with Christ in the Church, which is the supernatural united with nature and history and raising both "continuously into the sphere of the Spirit."[43]

Nevin has affirmed that Christ has introduced a new life into the very center of human nature. It is immanent to human nature. Then he says that we are "inserted into him by our regeneration" which becomes the counterpart of our first birth which makes us natural men. That is, the new life is immanent to human nature as it holds in Christ; it is not immanent to the individual.

The individual is born with the Adamic nature. In this state his life centers upon himself; he is spiritually dead. In his regeneration he responds to a divine attraction that draws him to Christ. Thus attracted and thus responding, the new life in Christ lodges itself in the inmost core of his personality. The new life does not become the possession of the individual in its entirety at that moment. Rather, it becomes

> . . . the principle or seed of our sanctification; which is simply the gradual transfusion of the same exalted spiritual quality or potence through our whole person. The process

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[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 246-47. [43] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

> terminates with the resurrection. . . . The old nature still continues to work. . . . But a new law is producing at every point an inward nisus in the opposite direction; which needs only to be filled with a new force continually from the magnetic centre, to carry all at last in its own way.[44]

The new life apprehends man at one point, but that point is central to his life. The new life involves a change at the core of his being. It is not the will, or the understanding or any other separate power or faculty, but all of these combined that is affected.

> Life is not thinking, nor feeling, nor acting; but the organic unity of all these, inseparably joined together. In this sense, we may say of our union with Christ, that it is a new life. It is deeper than all thought, feeling, or exercise of the will. Not a quality only. Not a new relation. A relation in fact, as that of iron to the magnet; but one that carries into the centre of the subject a form of being which was not there before. Christ communicates his own life substantially to the soul on which he acts, causing it to grow into his very nature. This is the mystical union; the basis of our whole salvation; the only medium by which it is possible for us to have an interest in the grace of Christ under any other view.[45]

The new life in Christ takes hold in the life of the individual only when he becomes a part of the new humanity, the church, of which Christ is the head. Immanence for the individual is concurrent with regeneration.

The relation one sustains to Christ in the mystical union is more intimate and deep than that which holds with Adam. Adam was simply the generic head of the race; Christ is its center, the "archetypal man" in whom the true ideal of humanity has come to light. That is, as we have noted above, the nature which had its start in Adam remains partial, incomplete, does not come to the ideal toward which nature and history has pointed, namely, "the exercise of a free, full personality," until at the core of our nature we are united with the divine nature.

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[44] *Ibid*., p. 168. [45] *Ibid*.

> In a deep sense thus, Christ is the universal Man. His person is the root, in the presence and power of which only all other personalities can stand, in the case of his people, whether in time or eternity. They not only spring from him, as we all do from Adam, but continue to stand in him, as an all present, everywhere active personal Life. In this way, they all have part in his divinity itself, though the hypostatical union, as such, remains limited of course to his own person. The whole Christ lives and works in the Church, supernaturally, gloriously, mysteriously, and yet really and truly. . . .[46]

Nevin inserts a footnote here which shows the influence of Schleiermacher on his thinking. At the same time it gives a clue to Nevin's definition of a Christian or of a Christian personality. Personality, he says, is constituted by "self-consciousness." In our natural state we have no consciousness that Adam is the center of our life. Man's consciousness is turned to the "self." But man, insofar as he has been renewed by the mystical union, comprehends within his self-consciousness that Christ is the center of his life. One can say that this feeling that Christ is at the center of life becomes the form in which one exists as a self-conscious person. It is only as the individual is consciously in communication with Christ as his life center that he can be regarded as a Christian. So, says Nevin,

> It is with reason, therefore, that Schleiermacher speaks of the communication which Christ makes of himself to believers as molding the person; since he imparts, in fact, a new, higher consciousness, that forms the basis of a life that was not previously at hand, the true center of our personality under its most perfect form.[47]

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[46] *Ibid.*, p. 169. [47] *Ibid.*

This communication with Christ includes necessarily a participation with the entire humanity of his theanthropic person. The union of the believer is not with the Logos alone. If it were, this would have the effect of raising the believer to the level of the Son of God himself. It would be tantamount to the repetition of the hypostatical union itself in every believer. This is one point at which Nevin disagreed with those who held that the union of the believer is with the divinity of Christ, with Federal theology in general, and as we shall see, with Hodge in particular. Such a supposition is monstrous, says Nevin. To say thatour union with Christ is a union with his divinity is to fall into the Gnostic heresy. To say that our union is with his humanity alone is equally heretical.

> The Word became flesh in Christ for the very purpose of reaching us in a real way. . . . The life of Christ was one. To enter us at all in a real way, it must enter us in its totality. To divide the humanity of Christ, is to destroy it; to take it away, and lay it no one can tell where. . . Christ's humanity is not his soul separately taken; just as little as it is his body separately taken. It is neither soul nor body as such, but the everlasting, indissoluble union of both.[48]

As the mystical union involves the totality of Christ's nature, so does it involve the totality of man's nature. To divide the life of the believer into the abstract entities of body and soul is just as unsound psychologically and Biblically as to so divide the life of Christ. Christ's life as a whole is borne over into the believer as a like whole. The communication is from the central ground of Christ's life to the center of man's life.

The new life which the individual finds in union with

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[48] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Christ begins to take possession of him by "degrees," a process which will become complete in the resurrection. It is the nature of man that his life is actualized only in the way of process or gradual historical development. As united to Christ he carries within him two forms of existence, a "law of sin and death" and "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The power of the first law continually opposes and seeks to restrain the power of the second. However, through the power of the whole Christ within, the law of his life progressively overcomes the law of Adam's life. The new life in its entirety is present potentially from the moment of regeneration. But it is under the limitations of "human life," as Nevin has consistently maintained, and so it unfolds gradually.

The full and final triumph of the process is the resurrection.

> The bodies of the saints in glory will be only the last result, in organic continuity, of the divine life of Christ, implanted in their souls at their regeneration. There is nothing abrupt in Christianity. It is a supernatural constitution indeed; but as such it is clothed in a natural form, and involves in itself as regular a law of historical development as the old creation itself. The resurrection body will be simply the ultimate outburst of the life that has been ripening for immortality under cover of the old Adamic nature before.[49]

In the mystical union, there is no room for the supposition of any material, tactual approach of the body of Christ to the persons of his people. Nor does his relation to them involve any "ubiquity or idealistic dissipation of his body" or any fusion of his individual personality with the persons of his people. As to the first qualification, Nevin maintains that it is not necessary in order to make believers partake of the humanity of Christ that his flesh and blood "materially considered" should in any way pass over into their lives. The continuity of organic existence from one cycle of life to another depends not on the material medium through which the process is affected, but on the presence of the living force, the power of a common life "immaterial altogether and impalpable" which gives form to substance and matter. So the life of Christ reaches over to the persons of his people, whole and entire, ". . . without the intervention of any material medium whatever . . . by the power of the Holy Ghost." The "law of this life" in the believer still holds in unbroken continuity with its root while it progressively takes full possession of its subject, soul and body.

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[49] Ibid., p. 177.

As to the second qualification that there is no fusion of his individual personality with the persons of his people, Nevin calls into play the distinction between the individual and universal or generic aspects of Christ's life. In his identity as an individual person, he has been received into heaven to remain there "till the time of the restitution of all things." His glorified body, having outward form and parts, must be defined and circumscribed by local limits and cannot be present in different places at the same time. It is therefore impossible to speak of "ubiquity in the case of Christ's body." The universal side of Christ's life is something else. His person, as generic, as universal, as the ever living and ever present root of the new life, is the actual bearer of our persons. In this sense, he is always personally present in his people.

There remains the all-important question of how the union of Christ with believers is brought about. The Holy Ghost, Nevin says, is the medium which initiates the new birth, and which sustains and advances the process from its commencement to its consummation in the resurrection. Here, he contends, we must guard against making

> . . . the presence of the Spirit a mere substitute for the presence of Christ. . . . The Spirit, proceeding from the Father and Son and subsisting in everlasting union with both, constitutes the form, in which and by which the new creation in Jesus upholds itself, and reveals itself, in all its extent. It is not _Nature_, but _Spirit_.[50]

This is to say that the presence of Christ in his people is the presence of the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit his whole life, soul and body, passes over to the believer.

Nevin is certain that when theologians of the New England brand of Puritanism talk about the Holy Spirit and the "spirit of Christ" they have in mind two separate entities. All agree that Christ is the source, in some way, of new life for his people. All agree that he does not dwell in them physically. He must therefore dwell in his people according to a supernatural constitution. But these theologians generally see the source of the new life as the presence and influence of Christ's Spirit in his people, in the sense that the same Spirit which dwells in Christ also dwells in his people. The Spirit thus defined, Nevin contends, is abstracted from Christ's person. Christ is present in his people by proxy or representation, and "not in the way of strict personal in being on his own part." When Nevin speaks of the Holy Spirit he means the Spirit of Christ and not a separate agency. The Apostles' Creed, he says, asserts that the saving power of Christ's life, now glorified, is carried over into the world through the medium of the Holy Spirit.[51] Faith in the Holy Ghost is not something independent of faith in the Incarnation. According to the Scriptures, says Nevin, the Holy Ghost could not be given until Christ was glorified. Christ bade his disciples to wait for the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was given on the day of Pentecost, in which act the foundation of the Christian Church was laid. The mystery of the Incarnation had to complete itself in the person of Christ before the revelation of its power in the form of the Holy Ghost could be given. Faith in Christ complete itself in faith in the Holy Ghost who is the completion of the Trinity.

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[50] _Ibid_., p. 175.

> A true Christology, involving, as it must, a living sense of the true import of Christ's life, carries in itself a demand for the extension of its power, in some way, over to the race he came to redeem. . . . This can be accomplished only through the living activity of the Holy Ghost; whose proper personality and work, accordingly, faith is thus brought to apprehend, we may say, of what it previously apprehended as the presence of God in Christ.[52]

The article in the Apostles' Creed which has reference to the Holy Ghost refers to the third person of the Trinity, not as an abstract entity, but as the entrance of God's Spirit into the life of the world as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the same Spirit which pours itself forth, age after age, in the Church. This is the extension of the Incarnation, the continuing redemptive activity of God as revealed in Christ--the theanthropic

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[51] Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed," p. 329.

[52] Ibid., p. 330.

Christ--whose glorified body is now at the right hand of God in heaven, but whose whole life, triumphant over mortality, with all its benefits now resides in the church through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Nevin means neither to deny the existence of the Holy Spirit prior to the Incarnation, nor to say that the Trinity commences with the Incarnation. Nor is Christ simply the proclaimer of the Trinity. The Spirit proceeds from and subsists in everlasting union with the Father and the Son, but the Spirit was never brought near to men as it has now through the Incarnate Word. In the Old Testament the Spirit communicated itself to men, but the presence of the Spirit was always an "afflatus or influence simply" exerted on the souls of the persons to whom it was extended. It is assumed everywhere in the New Testament that the presence of the Spirit since the Incarnation is of a wholly different order. The Spirit is the form in which the new creation in Christ upholds and reveals itself in time. With regard to the Trinity, Christ is ". . . the form of its exploration in the economy of time, the medium by which it manifests itself for faith, and so for knowledge, in the consciousness of the world."[53] The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is the continuing presence of the theanthropic Christ.

We must guard against limiting the presence of the Spirit to the soul as distinguished from the body in view of the fact that the new life holds through the medium of the Holy Spirit and is thus termed spiritual. The Spirit of Christ fills the whole man.

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 318.

> All is spiritual, glorious, heavenly. His whole humanity has been taken up into the sphere of the Spirit, and appears transfigured into the same life. And why then should it not extend itself, in the way of strict organic continuity, as a whole humanity also, by the active presence of Christ's Spirit, over into the persons of his people? A spiritual life no more excludes the thought of the body in the one case, than it does in the other.[54]

How can Christ's whole humanity, soul and body, pass over to the believer if his glorified earthly body remains in heaven! Here again one must remember the distinction Nevin makes between the "organic law which constitutes the proper identity of the human body" and the matter in which it externalizes itself in order to have concrete existence. It is the law of the theanthropic life of Christ, now transfigured into the sphere of the Spirit, which passes over into the life of his people, externalizes itself in their individual persons and in the Church, the visible, historical continuation of his life. The universal aspect of Christ's life as the head of the new humanity thus remains in the realm of the historical through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and through the concrete medium of the Church.

As the medium of living grace, the human nature of Christ and not simply his divinity is always active in the world in this way. The Mediation of Christ is not an act once accomplished, not something that lies beyond the actual order of the world with which we are to communicate in the way of thought or memory; it lives always in the actual presence of Christ in the world, particularly of his manhood.

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[54] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 176.

> If Christ be still Mediator, there must be the perpetual presence among us of his man's nature, whereby he who is one with the Father becomes one also with his brethren.[55]

Christ's presence in the world is in and by his mystical body, the Church.

> As a real human presence, carrying in itself the power of a new life for the race in general, it is no abstraction or object of thought merely, but a glorious living Reality, continuously at work, in an organic and historical way, in the world's constitution. Christ communicates himself to his people, and lives in them, not by isolated favor in each case, but collectively. His relation is at once to the whole family of the redeemed, and single Christians accordingly have part in him only as they are comprehended at the same time in this whole. To be in Christ, is to be a member also necessarily of his mystical body. . . . This is the idea of the Church. It comes from within and not from without. It grows out of the mystery of the Incarnation, apprehended as an abiding fact, and comes before us in the Creed accordingly, not as notion or speculation merely, but as an article of faith.[56]

The Church does not stand between Christ and the believer except as the body of a living man is between one of his limbs and the living soul by which it is quickened and moved. In a vital way, the mystical union with Christ is a union with his mystical body, the Church. Christianity comes to us as a system of redemption and salvation by a Mediator. Salvation calls for actual participation in its life and power; it is not something to be thought of simply, no matter how great the devotion of the believer. Salvation is inward, personal, and spiritual; mere relations and forms save no man. Nevin at least makes this concession to those who magnify "spiritual religion" as compared with a religion of forms and ordinances. Still, however, salvation hangs on a special economy, the Church, the mystical body of Christ, binding the believer in living union with his natural flesh and blood.

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[55] Nevin, "Wilberforce on the Incarnation," p. 186.

[56] *Ibid.*

> Christ becomes full only in and by the Church; and personal experience is made solid and real, only as it rests on grace offered and appropriated from abroad.[57]

Thus the Incarnation unfolds progressively in history in the Church within whose fold are encompassed the individuals who are in mystical union with Christ and all his benefits. The law of his life gradually overcomes the old law of sin and death in the believers in a process which is consummated in the resurrection.

Nevin's Christology and his doctrine of the Christian life as one of union with Christ was thus of one piece with his doctrine of the Church.[58] We have previously noted Nevin's contention in his sermon on "Catholic Unity" that the unity of the church is a cardinal principle of Christianity, that this unity arises out of the fact that the Church in its inner life as well as in its outward manifestation has its root and life in the person of Jesus Christ. Each Christian by virtue of being bound to Christ in mystical union is also bound to every other believer in Christ's body the Church. The believer finds salvation in the Church, the "whole" which existed before the individuals who compose it. The Church is one organic body in its contemporaneity as well as in history. The actual present and visible disunity of the Church does not abrogate this fact. It rather challenges the churches to deplore the division of Christ's body into sects and denominations, and to make visible and actual the unity of the Church as it is expressed in the words of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." This concept of the Church was originally expounded in the Sermon on "Catholic Unity" of 1844. Nevin expanded this idea in a sermon titled "The Church" which he preached in 1846, after the publication of his work The Mystical Presence. In this sermon he says that the idea of the Church which he developed in "Catholic Unity" belongs to "the Catholic side of the Reformation" and stands in bold opposition to the reigning "Puritanism" of the day which is characterized by "the want . . . of all proper faith in the Church as a real, supernatural, life-bearing constitution in the world."[59]

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[58] See chap. ii.

To be understood properly the Church must be viewed under two aspects, as the "Ideal Church" and as the "Actual Church." The Church must be looked at first as an idea. By idea Nevin meant not a simple sketch or thought or plan, but the expression or definition of "the very inmost substance of that which exists, as distinguished from its simply phenomenal character in time and space." It is the "truth and soul," the "ideal," the "potential" which existed before the actual. Hence the Church exists first as an idea or as an "ideal Church," the real church which existed before and gives substance to the "actual church."[60] Nevin defines the Ideal church as ". . . power of a new supernatural creation, which has been introduced into the actual history of the world by the incarnation of Jesus Christ . . .," a power which has been at work in the world from the time of Christ and will work until it shall transform the world into its image. Jesus Christ is the principle of this new creation. His life, included all the resources of life and salvation for all men for all time. The Church is the "depository of these resources" through all ages.

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[59] Nevin, "The Church," p. 3.

[60] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

From this ground, says Nevin, it is not difficult to determine the general attributes of the ideal church. It is a "living system, organically bound together in all its parts, springing from a common ground, and pervaded throughout with the force of a common nature"; therefore it is "catholic, that is, one and universal."[61] In the use of the designation Catholicity of the Church one must exercise caution, says Nevin. The general sense of the term catholic is understood to be of the same sense with universal. But there are two kinds of universality which can be reduced to the terms all and whole. The catholicity of the Church is not all the churches, as mechanical unity of the parts that belong to it. It is rather the whole, the "organic unity, where the parts as such have no separate and independent existence but draw their being from the universal unity itself in which they are comprehended, while they serve at the same time to bring it into view."[62] It is ". . . absolutely holy and infallible, free from error and free from sin . . ." since it derives from Christ who is the truth itself; it is therefore to be the "organ and medium, by which the world is reclaimed from error, and transformed into a holy life."[63] Further, the

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[61] Ibid. [62] Nevin, "Catholicism," pp. 2-3.

[63] Nevin, "The Church."

Church is the "necessary and only form, in which Christianity can have a real existence in the world."[64] The Church is not something added to humanity to enable it to achieve the Christian life, but it is this life itself lifting humanity into its own sphere. Nevin argues that human nature is primarily social and no man can be complete apart from his race. The Church, which is human nature made absolutely complete in Christ, is of the same character. Christianity, as the "power of a common or general life" can never appear as something isolated or single but always includes the idea of society and communion. This social character of Christianity resolves itself into the conception of the Church. The two, Christianity and the Church, are identical, and there can be no true Christian salvation or character out of the church or as separated from the general life of Christ in his people. Therefore, as catholic, the Church is "uncompromisingly inclusive." In an article titled "Catholicism" in the Mercersburg Review in 1851 Nevin said the Church can never possibly be satisfied with the object of a simply numerical salvation, to be accomplished in favor of a certain number of individual men, an abstract election of single souls, whether this be taken as large or small, a few only, or very many, or even all of the human family."[65] No sphere of life--the family, the state, art, science, philosophy, business, politics--can be allowed to remain outside its scope of redemption. The Church, as a new order of existence in the world, must progressively gather these into its life and thus take actual possession of the world with its redemptive power.

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[64] *Ibid*. [65] Nevin, "Catholicism," p. 10.

> Nothing really human can be counted legitimately beyond its scope; for the grand test of its truth is its absolute adequacy to cover the field of human existence at all points, its catholicity in the sense of measuring the entire length and breadth of man's nature. Either it is no redemption for humanity at all, or no constituent interest of humanity may be taken as extrinsical ever to its rightful domain.[66]

And here Nevin rejects the doctrine of predestination in terms of election and reprobation in the sense that God chose some for salvation (election) and condemned others for eternal death (reprobation). The attribute of catholicity which belongs to the church extends to the limits of man's nature considered individually and numerically in terms of all men, but more important it is immediately and directly concerned with the world of humanity as such. Its object is not simply the salvation of a few men or of all men but of the total life of the race including the individual man and all his institutions. Since no individual exists in a vacuum, and every individual is what he is because of the general social life of which he is a part, society as well as the individual must be the object of the saving mission of the church. The two interests cannot be separated. The church cannot be satisfied, as much of American Protestantism seems to be, with helping as many souls as possible in their separate individual character to flee from the wrath to come and to secure for themselves a good hope against the day of judgment, while openly surrendering whole areas of his life as profane.

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[66] _Ibid_., p. 11. Nevin expresses the same idea in his article "The Year 1848" in _Mercersburg Review_, Vol. I (Jan., 1849).

Nevin notes that he is not saying that all men will be saved as the Universalists conclude. Many men will fail in the case of the new creation in Christ and so may be said to perish more really than those who fell short of the end of human life as it came from Adam. It amounts to nothing whether one makes redemption to be for all men or for a fixed number of men. The proper end of Christianity is something more than an arithmetical salvation. It has to do with the whole new order of existence for the world which grows forth from the person of Christ and is as universal in its nature as the idea of humanity itself.

Finally, the ideal church includes in itself the necessity "of a visible externalization in the world" to take it out of the realm of abstraction and invisibility into the realm of the real and visible. It must become visible as an organic body--not the visibility of a single Christian--and it must be visible in all its aspects--catholicity, unity, sanctity, and comprehensiveness.

Under its second aspect, therefore, Nevin defines the Church as actual. This is the concrete revelation of the ideal Church in the way of actual life among men. The actual Church began with the incarnation of Christ, extends to the present and anticipates the future. It is to be thought of as a process.

> The Church as it now stands is the result of what the same church has been since the time of Christ; the past is gathered up and comprehended in the present; and the whole is reaching forward to still new developments in the future, that will cease only when the ideal Church and the actual Church shall have become fully and forever one.[67]

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[67] Nevin, "The Church," pp. 11-12.

The actual Church requiring as it does a process of evolution supposes ". . . imperfection and defect . . . opposition, contradiction and conflict; disturbing forces; foreign elements; corruptions, distortions, aberrations. The historical church is always the true Church; but never a pure or perfect Church."[68] For this reason, for the Roman Church to claim to be infallible is an absurdity since this amounts to a claim to be the ideal Church, and would require that the Roman Church also claim sinless perfection, which it does not. The process of the actual church in history cannot be said to require a visible unity of worship and organization either, since its very nature as actual involves it in error. He nevertheless decries the sect system and the grand divisions of Christianity as an abomination which must pass away. And he scoffs at the pretensions of high church Episcopalianism and the Church of Rome for insisting on visible unity within the fold of one or the other, since this is to transfer to the actual church what belongs to the ideal church and to identify it with a particular communion.

Having noted these limitations on the achievement of the actual Church one must still remember that the actual church is the bearer of the ideal Church.

> The history of the actual Church then is but the presence and life of the ideal Church itself struggling through a process of centuries to come to its last full manifestation. In the end the process will be complete, and then, though not sooner, the actual will be found commensurate in all respects with the ideal. Meanwhile, however, they are bound, in the process itself, inseparably together. The historical Church may be involved in error or sink in corruption; filled with

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[68] _Ibid_., pp. 12-13.

> heterogeneous elements; overloaded with all forms of perversion and abuse. But still it is always the bearer of the ideal Church, and the form under which it has its manifestation in the world. . . . The actual is the body of the ideal in growth; the process, constantly changing and flowing, by which it is externalized and so made complete, as the great world-fact of redemption.[69]

This being in general the nature of the Church, Nevin inquires what are its prerogatives and claims in the work of salvation? By this Nevin says he means to ask, what is that faith in the Holy Catholic Church which is declared in the Apostles' Creed? In the series of the Apostles' Creed Nevin held that the Creed affirms the fact that the divine supernatural order which began with the incarnation of the Son of God is continued historically in the Church. There can be no Church without Chirst, but the proposition may be reversed to say "no Church, no Christ." In the economy of salvation Christ and the church are equivalent, and he who thinks he can have faith in Christ without faith in the Church deceives himself. The Church is the only form in which the grace of Christ is brought within the reach of man. The Church, according to the Creed, is a "visible, catholic, historical, life-bearing Church," and "object of faith," not a mere creation or creature of human will. It is "the general, objective, universal side of Christianity" and though it can never be sundered from "individual religion in the Church" it is not the "product and consequence of this"; the salvation of the individual "lies, not beyond the Church and out of it, but directly in its bosom."[70] Nevin expands this characterization in several propositions:

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 15. [70] Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed," p. 334.

1. The Church of the Creed is visible and comprehends the invisible just as the body bears the soul within it. An absolutely invisible Church can never be apprehended as real or as an object of knowledge and faith.

2. The Church of the Creed is catholic in the sense that it is one and all comprehensive. In the end, its divisions will pass away and the whole world must be taken up into its constitution. It is one now in the sense that all church bodies are component parts of the one body of Christ in the world.

3. The Church of the Creed is historical in the sense that it has continuous, visible concrete form and existence in the world to the end of time. Its forms may change, but it can never disappear as an outward, visible entity. Protestants have been wrong who have held that the Church of the Creed failed for a time "its old life having either failed altogether or run out into universal apostasy" to take an entirely new start in the sixteenth century or at any other time.[71]

4. The Church of the Creed is life-bearing, that is, the same life-giving powers resident in Christ still spring perpetually from Christ himself by his presence in the church through the Holy Ghost. Hence one speaks of the objective character of the Church, its sacraments, its ordinances. The Church is not the sum total of all the "individual actings of piety that are found in its compass."[72] It has an objective life-bearing character apart from these which expresses itself through its ordinances

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[71] Nevin, "The Church," p. 22.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 24.

and institutions which are divine and belong to the sphere of the supernatural.

> The ministry for instance is far more than any merely human institution could ever be possibly under this form. The office is a necessary organ of the body of Christ, and as such it is the bearer of a divine supernatural power. . . . Ordination does convey, in this sense, objective virtue or force, such as no man, in the ordinary course of things, can be allowed to possess without it. So all ministerial functions are as such of more force, than any common human transactions bearing a similar form. . . . The Church has power to bind and loose upon the earth. The regular functions of the ministry are divine functions. Church censures and church absolutions too, take hold upon the invisible world. Church services involve the force of a true liturgical sacrifice, which serves of itself to bring men near to God. The sacraments in particular have living power in themselves.[73]

If one denies all this, says Nevin, he reduces the fact of the incarnation to a "Gnostic abstraction," a thing of mere memory and notion.

> If there be no supernatural force in the ministry and sacraments for their own ends, it is plain that the entire objective character of the Church, and with this its true historical character, and at last its character as a real divine constitution, the "Body of Christ" in the world, must virtually fall to the ground at the same time.[74]

Nevin's doctrine of the Church as thus spelled out was of one piece with his rejection of the pietistic revivalistic tradition and his attempt to reaffirm what he felt to be the position of the Reformers in the right wing classical tradition which he held to be in continuity with the creeds of the early Church. The "Church Question" was one occupying the center of attention so far as Nevin was concerned. The issue was joined, he felt, by critics of the church between a "religion of forms and a religion of spirit." Those who argue for a religion of spirit actually oppose Christ and the Church to one another as rivals, and accuse those who uphold the Church of the Creed as having "a superstitious zeal for rites and ceremonies . . . at the cost of all heart godliness."[75] This is to argue the question on a superficial basis. The problem is not between a religion of rites and a religion of spirit. The real question is whether or not the Church is ". . . the actual organic presence of the new creation in Christ Jesus among men, comprising in itself all the supernatural life powers which were introduced into the world by the incarnation. . . ." in which the individual is brought from birth to Christian maturity through faithful participation in the sacraments, ordinances and educational process of the Church.[76] The alternative is one which makes religion a personal thing, a transaction between every individual and his Maker, and which deprecates all reliance on the Church as a peril to the soul. This view says:

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[73] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[74] *Ibid.*

> I believe in repentance and conversion, then in the communion of saints, and finally in some sort of holy catholic church; putting the individual isolated Christianity, in order of thought, before that which is general and collective.[77]

It exalts Christ, repentance and faith at the expense of all that is comprehended in the idea of the Church as the body of Christ. It repeats the Gnostic heresy not by denying the real, historical Christ, but by denying his real, historical abiding presence in the Church. It leaves the church without sacraments, without history, without the divine-human Christ who is the origin and constant principle of the new creation. Nevin charges that those who do this are in the tradition of the Anabaptists and in close affinity with Hegelian Pantheism.

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[75] *Ibid.*, p. 26. [76] *Ibid.* [77] *Ibid.*

Nevin therefore holds that his doctrine of Christ and his relationship to the Church, stands in sharp contrast to the doctrine, as generally held by the churches in the Reformed tradition in America, by the Lutherans and by the Sects. In the preface to Antichrist he characterizes the points at which they differ from his own views. Both systems reduce man to a multitude of living units and imputes Adam's sin to them purely on the basis of God's own sovereign pleasure, with no concept of the organic unity of mankind or of man as organically related to Adam. Parallel to this is the concept of the Incarnation as a mere expedient contrived to solve the problem of redemption and atonement and held aloft from the whole process of the world's history. It makes Christ's word and work rather than his person the medium of revelation. It allows divinity and humanity to be united in his life but proceeds to abstract his divinity from his humanity so that it stands in no organic relationship to our humanity. It makes Christ our representative by sheer covenant and decree rather than allowing the constitution of his person to be a new organic root of a new race. He is the author simply of a redemption which is made over to his people by divine thought. He now stands in no real relation to the world but is bound to heaven, subject to the same limitations which attach to our existence in time and space. He communicates with the world, as he did before the incarnation, in his divine nature or by the Holy Spirit as his substitute or proxy. The mystical union is a union with Christ only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a separate agency. It conceives of Christ as present in his Church but only through the Holy Spirit as separated from Christ's person, again by way of proxy, and not in the way of abiding, historical, personal presence. It allows no historical, objective character to the Church, turning it into an invisible, Gnostic abstraction. The spirit of this theology is one of bold doctrinal abstraction. It makes the relation of God to his creation to be "that of an artificer over against the mechanism of his own work. The last principle of things is an outward decree which it is his business to execute in a like outward way."[78] Nevin might have added that this is the God of Newton and Locke, standing outside his creation. The supernatural is never allowed any real contact with the natural, the divine no real union with the human. It understands the Trinity as a logical formula or definition of the God-head rather than a living revelation of God though Christ now present in the church as the Holy Spirit.

This characterization, says Nevin, defines Hodge's general doctrinal position regarding Christ and his relationship to the Church, and this in the very heart of so-called Reformed orthodoxy. Nevin found an indication of an even lower view than this in the Reformed tradition in Albert Barnes representing New School Presbyterianism, and, he presumed, the general divinity of New England. Barnes suggests that there are three general theories of our relation to Adam. There is the view of the abler Calvinistic writers including Calvin, who see the human race involved in Adam's condemnation on the ground of a real union between them as the root and branches of a common life. There is the view of Princeton and the Biblical Repertory that the involvement is by mere arbitrary sovereign imputation. There is the view, which he accepts, that admits the fact of man's general sinfulness without making any attempt to explain it, the school of New Haven Divinity. Still, says Barnes, if he had to choose between the first two views he would take that of Calvin since it has the merit of consistency, retains the Scripture use of language, and uses words as they are employed in common life.

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[78] Nevin, "Antichrist," Preface, p. 13.

In the same review in which Hodge attacked Nevin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, he declared Nevin's theory of nature of Christ and his relationship to the Church to be a radical rejection of the doctrine of the Reformation.

First, says Hodge, the theory is not Nevin's or that of the Reformation; it is the theory of Schleiermacher. Second, Nevin's system is a "peculiar psychology applied to the illustration and determination of Christian doctrine . . . founded on certain views of organic law and personality, and of generic and individual life."[79] If this psychology is incorrect, the doctrine of the book The Mystical Presence is gone since it is based wholly upon it.

With regard to his reliance upon Schleiermacher, Nevin noted that he had read Schleiermacher some and hoped to read him more. But it is a mistake to say that he copied from him the theory of Christ. The influence on his thinking had come to him largely through the medium of German theology in general which he had undoubtedly influenced.

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[79] Charles Hodge's review of The Mystical Presence in Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence," Weekly Messenger, XIII (July 19, 1848) 2665.

> Such men as Neander, Tholuck, Julius Mueller, Nitzsch, Twesten Ullman, Dorner, Rothe, etc., all own his influence and speak reverently of his name and character. If I am to be reckoned among his disciples, it can be at best only in the general way in which these and many others of like character, with all their acknowledged theological independence, may be distinguished with the same title.[80]

Schleiermacher left no school and no system; his merit lies in the fact that he broke with Rationalism and prepared the ground for a new and higher theological life. He stimulated others to thought by his own deep and suggestive ideas.

Beyond this acknowledgment, says Nevin, it takes only a little knowledge of Schleiermacher or The Mystical Presence to discern that he has not copied Schleiermacher. No man was less bound than Schleiermacher by the "authority of the outward and objective," no protestantism "more absolute and free than his," whereas, the great object of The Mystical Presence is to assert the claims of the objective, historical, sacramental churchly religion over against the subjectivity of mere private judgment and private will."[81] Nobody ever thought of bringing such a charge against Schleiermacher. So the much more informative influence in his thinking, so far as the doctrine of the Church is concerned, says Nevin, is the later German theology which has done much to promote right views of history, deeper apprehensions of the Christological question, and more realistic conceptions altogether of the new creation Christ introduced into the world. He knows of no particular view with which he would agree in toto, but the general theological ideas served to bring his own ideas into "a right position."

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[80] Ibid. [81] Ibid.

Nevin's relationship to German theology is clearly pictured in his use of Ullmann's work on "The Distinctive Character of Christianity" which he translated and used as a preface to The Mystical Presence. Ullmann notes that the dominant note of German theology in the contemporary period had been that which finds the distinctive character of Christianity to consist "in the union of man with God," and in this way to regard Christianity as the "absolutely perfect religion because it unites the divine and human fully as one life," in contrast to the view of Christianity as a doctrine, for example in the Greek Church, or as a law as held by Romanism and later by Rationalism, though in different terms.[82] German theology and philosophy in asserting the doctrine of the Christian life as one of the union of man and God had run out into aberrations, as in the speculative pantheism of Hegel, but it had rendered the service of calling attention to the person of Christ. Schleiermacher, says Ullman, seeking to do full justice to this distinctive doctrine, as well as to other cardinal elements comprehended in the term Gospel, "sought to refer all back to its last ground or living root, the person of Christ himself."[83] He viewed Christ as Redeemer and Christianity as "the world historical Religion of Redemption"; that which constitutes Christianity as distinguished from all other forms of religion is "the reference which all that belongs to it is found to include, to the consciousness of redemption through the person of Jesus of Nazareth."[84] This was an advance on the idea of Christianity as doctrinal or ethical. But Schleiermacher, Ullman continues, was deficient in the sense that he lacked a proper appreciation of the nature of sin and the need of atonement. His theological views were characterized by a subjectivity, a concept of religion as a form of feeling, and he confined himself to the matter of inward experience, to the Christian salvation as carried forward in the life of the subject. In this way he neglected the necessity of the atonement, "the outward reference, establishing a right relation between the sinner and a holy God."[85] He undervalued the objective side of the Christian faith, the work of Christ, which makes redemption possible.

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[82] Ullman, "The Distinctive Character of Christianity," translated by Nevin from Theologische Studien und Kritiken (January, 1845), and reproduced in The Mystical Presence. This quotation is from the translation, p. 17.

It is evident that Nevin shared this awareness of Schleiermacher's deficiency, but he was indebted to Schleiermacher for awakening him to the importance of the Christological question.

As for the second general criticism, Nevin is sure Hodge has a psychology also which rules his whole theological system. Hodge must surely know that there is room too for improvement even in psychology, and that theology must undergo modification while still carrying forward and upholding the "inward substance of the Christian faith . . . at each point in its original freshness and power."[86] One is reminded here of the famous dictum of Modernism regarding abiding truths in changing categories.

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[83] Ibid., p. 25. [84] Ibid. [85] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

Hodge goes on to make some specific accusations. With regard to the person of Christ, Nevin is guilty of Eutychianism or something worse when he says that in Christ, in virtue of the hypostatical union, soul and body, the divine and human are so united as to form one life. "Eutyches . . . taught that after the hypostatical union there was in Christ but one nature and one operation. Substitute the word life, for its equivalent, nature, and we have the precise statement of Dr. Nevin."[87] Nevin says he could hardly believe his eyes when he found so reputable a scholar as Hodge using the term nature as equivalent with life. Life means personality, the union of body and soul, which though separate in their nature, form in man one indivisible life. To deny this is to introduce a dualism which subverts the conception of humanity altogether. Any Christology constructed on this denial turns the incarnation into a Gnostic fancy. In the hypostatical union the human and the divine were so united in Christ as to result in "the organic comprehension of both in a single undivided life . . . one personal consciousness."[88] Not to admit such an organic unity in the life of Christ is the error of Nestorius. It is Hodge's error also, for by implication he asserts the presence of two lives in Christ, two centers of consciousness--one divine, one earthly--which never came to any vital organic and permanent union but are joined together in an outward partnership under the form of a common person. This turns the incarnation into a transient phenomena.

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[86] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence," ibid.

[87] Ibid., July 26, 1848, p. 2669. [88] Ibid.

> Let it be felt, on the other hand, that the everlasting Word has really become flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, and it must be felt in the same proportion that a like everlasting character belongs of necessity to all his mediatorial functions and acts . . . not as something long since separated from his person; but as the propitiatory force of an offering, whose all prevalent worth still springs from this perpetually as its ground and fountain. This is the deep idea which we find caricatured in the perpetual sacrifice, as it is called, of the Roman mass.[89]

To the mind of Calvin, says Nevin, this deep catholic truth involved the very ground of Christianity itself.

Having charged Nevin with Eutychianism Hodge asks what, in his view, was this life or nature of Christ? The answer Nevin gives is, "it was in all respects a true human life," Christ being "the archetypal man," "the true ideal man." Now, Hodge maintains, there are only two ways to interpret this doctrine. One is the Socinian way which holds Christ to be the ideal or perfect man; and, after all, is a perfect man anything more than a mere man? The only escape from Socinianism is to deify man, by identifying the divine and the human, and this is Pantheism. Hodge says he is not accusing Nevin of either of these heresies but one or other ~~is~~ the legitimate consequence of his language and doctrine. Besides this it has always been a matter of dispute in Germany to which class Schleiermacher's Christology belongs.

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[89] Ibid.

Nevin retorts that he denies any such consequences flowing from his doctrine of Christ. The ideal man is more than a mere man; he is "the true idea of humanity," not of a single man. The word humanity expresses the life of the race as a whole. Humanity cannot become complete save in living union with God, and it comes to this union fully only in the person of Christ, "who on this very account is the central, universal, archetypal MAN."[90] In his person all that the perfection of humanity requires came to life; he embodies the ideal toward which all history, all nature, all religion has been striving, "after a true and real union with the nature of God, as the necessary complement and consummation of its own life."[91] He is the summit of the process by which the creation through successive order of existence struggles upward from inorganic life to man in whom the mystery of nature becomes intelligible and complete, and who in turn finds himself complete in Christ, his only medium of communication with the divine nature. Nevin simply affirms that in Christ, for the first time, the supernatural invaded the very life of the natural to reveal itself in the actual process of human life and history, whereas before it revealed itself above and beyond nature, a revelation of God to man rather than of God in man.[92]

Hodge further takes to task Nevin's doctrine of justification. He objects to Nevin's assertion that man partakes of Adam's sin by partaking of his nature and that he partakes of the righteousness of Christ by partaking of his nature. Nevin's contention that God cannot reckon to anyone an attribute or quality which does not belong to him in fact, and that therefore the ground of man's righteousness must be immanent to human nature as a resident in Christ impugns the vital Protestant doctrine of justification. Nevin knows as well as any man, Hodge continues, that all the churches of the sixteenth century held

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[90] Ibid. [91] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, pp.200-201.

[92] Ibid., p. 206.

> . . . that the sin of Adam is imputed to us, not because of our having his corrupted nature, but because of the imputation of his sin, we are involved in his corruption. . . . He knows moreover, that, with regard to justification, the main question was, whether it was a declaratory or an effective act, whether it was a declaring just on the ground of a righteousness not in us, or a making just by communicating righteousness to us. Romanists were as ready as Protestants to admit that the act by which men are rendered just actually, was a gracious act, but they denied that justification is a forensic or declaratory act founded on the imputation of the righteousness of Christ which is neither in us, nor by that imputation communicated as a quality to our souls. It was what Romanists thus denied, Protestants asserted and made a matter of such importance.[93]

Nevin's doctrine is "subjective justification" and nothing more.

Dr. Berg criticized Nevin in a similar manner. To speak of Christ's righteousness as immanent to man's nature, as Nevin does, is to say that man is justified on the basis of merit which belongs to him. Orthodox theology, says Berg, holds that justification is a forensic act on the part of God who declares the sinner to be righteous on the ground simply of setting Christ's righteousness to his account.[94]

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[93] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence," p. 2673.

[94] J. W. Nevin, "Dr. Berg on Justification," Weekly Messenger, IXX (August 11, 1847), 2477.

How it happened that the Word actually became united to man's nature as fallen is precisely the mystery of the incarnation, says Nevin. How Christ could have done anything to extricate human nature from its fallen state or to satisfy God's justice outside of real union with that nature would propound an even deeper mystery. To deny that man fell in Adam and became righteous in Christ is to turn both the fall and the atonement into a "commercial transaction," carried on outside humanity altogether and then arbitrarily charged to its account by an abstract decree or fiat of the Almighty. This, says Nevin, is Hodge's doctrine. Nevin denies that he makes justification subjective, that is, something inherent in man's nature itself, as Hodge charged. It is inherent only in human nature as this holds in the life of Christ. Truly God imputes Christ's righteousness to man, but only as God sets him "truly and really in Christ . . . not so as to make him at once personally holy; but in such a way that the principle of a new creation is lodged in his life."[95] The righteousness of Christ which is set to man's account has its roots in Christ's life and therefore in human nature which is involved in his life. Dr. Berg and Dr. Hodge both make the mistake of using the word "humanity" to signify all men, that is, the whole or sum of individual men. Humanity, says Nevin, is not a sandtrap of individuals but an organic unity.

> To be set to our account . . . The atonement must be immanent to humanity, something that holds in the actual life of our nature; not as the inherent property of those who are justified; but as a result fully reached in Christ, in whom is comprised potentially all that our nature through him is destined to

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[95] J. W. Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence," August 2, 1848, p. 2673.

> become. It is thus the attribute of humanity under its new form, just as guilt and condemnation go with our life under its first form. In justification, it is made to reach over by God's act to the believing sinner. Still it has force only as it holds in the life of Christ, and not as abstracted from this in the way of mere thought.[96]

Nevin's whole system is "churchly," says Hodge, and here again he departs from the spirit of the Reformed Church by making "religion to be a church life, its manifestations a liturgical service, its support sacramental grace."[97] In the Protestant view, says Hodge, "the true church is the communion of saints, the 'congregatio sanctorum,' the 'company of faithful men'; not the company of organizing or professing men."[98] On "the main question whether we come to Christ, and then to the Church, whether we by a personal act of faith receive him, and by union with him become a member of his mystical body, or whether all access to him is through a mediating church" Nevin decides against the whole evangelical system by espousing the later alternative.[99] This is the fundamental error of Romanism.

Nevin wonders if Hodge had read the Apostles' Creed in its true sense, with its affirmation of the church as an object of faith, growing out of the mystery of the incarnation and thus containing "all the attributes and prerogatives of the mystical body of Christ."[100]

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[96] Ibid. See also Nevin, The Mystical Presence, pp. 191-92. On this point Nevin called to his defense the work of Albert Barnes, "Defense and Other Documents" in which Barnes notes three theories with regard to man's relation to Adam: (1) Calvin's view that the imputation is made to rest on the fact of a common life shared; (2) The Princeton view which resolves the imputation into a mere outward transaction; (3) The theory that Barnes and the New Divinity School held which takes the facts as they stand without any attempt to explain them. Barnes rejects both the Calvinist and Princeton view, but as between them he prefers Calvin.

[97] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence," p. 2673.

[98] Ibid. [99] Ibid.

Hodge was not wanting for appropriate titles for Nevin's system--Eutychianism, Socinianism, Pantheism, Romanism. Now he hurled the charge of Rationalism. Nevin's system, he says, is in its essential element a psychology which reduces the Christian faith to a law, or force with Christ as its inner principle, a new life created in the disciples by certain impressions Christ made on them which has been perpetuated in and by the Church. "As it owes its power to Christ, it is always referred back to him, so that it is a Christian consciousness, a consciousness of this union with Christ."[101] Nevin scarcely deigned to answer this charge beyond saying that Hodge evidently has no concept of Christianity which makes Christ the organic root of a new creation represented, born and carried along in the Church to the end of the world.

Not having exhausted the heretical possibilities Hodge concludes by saying that Nevin's system has a strong affinity for Sabellianism and has to all intents and purposes discarded the doctrine of the Trinity. Nevin does not seem to know what to do with the Holy Spirit! He appears to identify the Holy Spirit with the glorified theanthropic Christ, who now subsists and acts in the Spirit. The unavoidable conclusion of this interpretation, says Hodge, is that the Spirit is not the third person of the Trinity but the theanthropic nature of Christ as it dwells in the Church. This flies in the face of the Bible and the Creed of the Church universal which says there are three distinct persons in the Godhead and that the Church is the temple of God and the body of Christ because of the presence there of the Holy Ghost. Nevin has reworked Schleiermacher for whom the Holy Spirit is simply the spirit which animates the church and has no existence outside it.

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[100] *Ibid.*

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 2677.

"However it may be in the case of Schleiermacher," Nevin retorted, "I deny it so far as the system of the Mystical Presence is concerned."[102] If there is anything clear at all in the Mystical Presence, the Bible and Calvin,

> . . . it is that the Spirit as now active in the Church is the revelation of the power of Christ's mediatorial or theanthropic life, under a form that was not possible till Christ himself was glorified.[103]

Hodge's concluding criticism really set Nevin's scalp to tingling. Hodge remarked,

> Burke once said, he never knew what the London beggars did with their cast off clothes, until he went to Ireland. We hope we Americans are not to be arrayed in the cast-off clothes of the German mystics and then marshalled in bands as the "Church of the Future.[104]

Nevin replied that it would take little trouble to retort to this reply in equally insulting terms, but such would not serve the cause of charity or truth. In view of the fact that he was in the German Church, he maintained, it was part of his duty to bring it to grips with German thinking. It had as much right to respect as the thinking of England, Scotland or New England. It is not necessary to follow slavishly Kant and Hegel,

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[102] Ibid. [103] Ibid. [104] Ibid.

Schleiermacher, Rothe, Dorner, Mueller, et al., but any theology which ignores their earnest wrestlings is not worth note. Nevin concluded that despite Hodge's trite, easy sarcasm, completely unworthy of him, he was thankful for his review since it was the first attempt, in any scientific style, to come to terms with the Mystical Presence with respectable argument based on some knowledge of the subject. It had at least served to bring attention to the most important questions facing the Church, and the alternatives between which it must make a choice.

> What think ye of Christ? is the searching interrogation which lies at the bottom of this whole inquiry concerning the character of the new creation comprehended in Christ's Church. Is he the fountain, principle, root of the whole christian life in a real way; or only the outward occasion of it, as a fact beyond his person? Is the redemption of the gospel, including all the benefits of Christ's life and death, a concrete reality, that holds in the force of his living constitution as a perennial, indissoluble fact, "the new world which grace has made," and in this alone; or is it an abstraction which may be applied to men and appropriated by faith, in no connection whatever with the LIFE by which originally it was brought to pass? Our inward answer to all this must ever be conditioned necessarily by our view of the Church; and our view of the Church finds its exact measure in our theory of the holy sacraments. Eviscerate these of their old catholic sense, and it is vain to pretend any true faith in the article of a holy, Catholic Church as it stood in the beginning; and without this faith again, the Christological mystery is necessarily shorn of its proper significance and glory.[105]

Thus did Nevin draw the issue with regard to Christ and the Church as against the position held by most of the Protestant churches of his day, New England Puritanism and the Princetonian School under Hodge in particular.

Hodge's blanket condemnation of Nevin's doctrine of Christ and the Church and of the doctrine of justification as a radical rejection of the doctrine and theology of the Reformation must undoubtedly be qualified. Nevin was at one with Luther and Calvin in insisting that there cannot be true Christian salvation outside the Church or as separated from the general life of Christ's people. On the doctrine of justification Nevin also stands with Calvin who saw both man's involvement in the sin of Adam and his sharing in the benefits of Christ's life and death in terms of a real union between them as the root and branches of a common life. He does not reject the concept of forensic justification, but he does ground it in the "indwelling Christ" rather than in the simple transference of the benefits of the atonement to man's account as it was being interpreted by his contemporaries. Justification for Nevin is a process by which the new life in Christ, the new humanity now triumphant over the disease at the heart of man's nature, lodges itself at the very heart of the life of the believer to become the center of his consciousness and the power which progressively destroys the law of sin and death in his life. Berg and Hodge both misinterpreted Nevin when they accused him of basing the justification of the individual on merit which belongs to him rather than on a righteousness which is not his but belongs to Christ alone.

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[105] Ibid.

It is clear that Nevin made several distinct departures from the theology of reigning American orthodoxy. This is most apparent in the fact that he makes the doctrine of the Incarnation central to his theology rather than the doctrine of the atonement, and that he makes the church to be the continuation of the life of Christ in an historical institution which bears all the benefits of his mediatorial life rather than an association or fellowship of regenerate individuals.

Within these major variations are also differences with respect to the nature of man and of Christ. He departed from the prevailing "faculty psychology" with its body-soul dualism to assert that body and soul are an organic unity. This idea combined with that of the generic nature of man and of Christ had implications for the doctrines of the fall, of the atonement and of justification. On this ground one can neither abstract the results of Adam's fall nor of Christ's redemptive work and apply them to man in a simply mechanical fashion. They are integral to human nature in its general character. As stemming from Adam the race shares his nature as fallen, as stemming from Christ the race as redeemed shares his divine-human nature in its totality. The mystical union is a union with Christ's nature as generic and with his life as an organic unity. As we shall see, this psychology also had implications for the doctrine of the sacraments.

Nevin believes he has also corrected the abstract dualism of prevailing orthodoxy with regard to the natural and the supernatural. His doctrine of the Incarnation takes the significance of Christ's life out of the realm of an event once happened and makes it to be a perennial fact in the onward flow of history. The supernatural does not stand over the natural affecting it only by way of indirect influence. History has meaning in terms of the fact that the supernatural is now bound indissolubly to the natural and will remain so bound until man and all his institutions are apprehended by it and transformed. The redemptive concern of the Church is not simply with the individual. It counts no sphere of man's life as outside its scope. Its operation is to be understood in terms of a process which will be complete only with consummation of all things.

Nevin's organic psychology, his concept of the generic nature of Adam, and of Christ, the Centrality of the Incarnation and its continuity in history via the Church, the interpretation of the mystical union as a life union with Christ through his life-bearing Church--all represent distinctive approaches in Protestant American thought. In asserting this position Nevin denied any church character to the Sects at all, completely unchurching them as heretical and schismatic. He was not quite as hard on Puritanism, but he did hold that its doctrinal position had a distinct affinity for sectarian modes of thought and could in no way claim to be a return to the purity of the early church. At best both sectarianism and Puritanism are to be viewed as interimistic,destined eventually to pass away.

CHAPTER V

THE SACRAMENTS

> The Question of the Eucharist is one of the most important belonging to the history of religion. It may be regarded indeed as in some sense central to the whole Christian system. For Christianity is grounded in the living union of the believer with the person of Christ; and this great fact is emphatically concentrated in the mystery of the Lord's Supper; which has always been clothed on this very account, to the consciousness of the Church, with a character of sanctity and solemnity, surpassing that of any other Christian institution.[1]

With these words Nevin opens the discussion of the Lord's Supper in The Mystical Presence which he described as a vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic doctrine of the Holy Eucharist. They gave us a clue to the importance he attached to this sacrament.

Nevin came to the question of the Church and Christology through the question of the sacraments. A high estimate of the sacraments entered into his thinking early in life, for as we have noted, the churchly sacramental religion of his youth at Middle Spring came into sharp conflict with the unchurchly revivalistic system at Union College. He became convinced, as he says in Pseudo-Protestantism in 1854 and The Mystical Presence in 1846 that as the Eucharist forms the heart of Christian worship, so the question of the Church centers ultimately in the sacramental question as its inmost heart and core. "Our view of the Lord's

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[1] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 51.

Supper must ever condition and rule in the end our view of Christ's person and the conception we form of the Church. It must influence at the same time very materially, our whole system of theology, as well as our idea of ecclesiastical history."[2] One is not to suppose that the central place of the sacramental theory in Luther and Calvin was a blind carry-over from popery, and thus carried no inward relation to their theology in other respects. They both felt that the inmost life of religion hinged on this doctrine. This doctrine enshrines or epitomizes the whole force of what Christ is and what he accomplished.

For this reason the sacramental question became the focus of Nevin's concern early in his career at Mercersburg. He was convinced that the question of the nature of the Church formed the central problem of his day, but he began his discussion not from the problem of the Church and its authority per se but from the central expression of the life of the Church in its worship as centered in the Lord's Supper. He was convinced that the Reformed Churches of his time, the German and Dutch Reformed, the Presbyterian, as well as those in the Lutheran tradition, were chargeable with a serious loss of original Protestant orthodoxy on this point. Concerned as he was with the revival and growth of the German Reformed Church in its true life, he tried to bring it face to face with its own doctrinal position. A revival of the Protestant position of the sixteenth century on the Lord's Supper could be the fulcrum for lifting the standards of the church all along the line. He therefore sets himself to the task of showing what the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper was in the sixteenth century and of showing that there had been a material departure from it in his own church and others in the Reformed tradition. It is our purpose in this chapter to trace this attempt. Within the context of the church system of which the sacraments are central he also finds the significance of baptism and the ordinances of the church.

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[2] Ibid., Preface, p. 1.

Conceivably then the discussion of the sacramental question should precede that of Christ and the Church. However, his sacramental theory is so dependent upon his psychology of man and his doctrine of Christ that we have given them prior treatment. In order to keep the record straight it might be well to note that in order of treatment Nevin first discussed the question of the sacramental doctrine of the sixteenth century in The Mystical Presence and then proceeded to spell out the Christology which he felt was necessary to make the doctrine of the sacraments intellectually and philosophically defensible. A sound sacramental theory carries with it the demand for a sound Christology and Ecclesiology.

Nevin was convinced that any change in the doctrine which moved away from the substance of the understanding of the Eucharist held by the early church and by the reformers of the sixteenth century necessarily involved a change in the doctrines of Christ's person, of the Church, and of the nature of salvation. Regarding this he says,

> In the nature of the case, this change must involve much more than the simple substitution of one theory of the Lord's

> Supper for another. The doctrine of the Eucharist is intimately connected with all that is most deep and central in the Christian system as a whole; and it is not possible for it to undergo any material modification in any direction, without a corresponding modification at the same time of the theory and life of religion at other points.[3]

Nevin believed that since the sixteenth century a revolution had taken place in the form in which the doctrine of the Lord's Supper was held, and that its consequences could be seen in much of the Protestantism of his day. The revolution had not passed by his own church, and the current Reformed doctrine involved a falling away from the original Reformed creed as found in the symbolic books of the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century. The revolution was apparent in the Lutheran Church, especially American Lutheranism. It was broadly displayed in the rampant rationalism of the continental churches, and in the sect groups which showed an affinity for Rationalism, notably, the Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, and Mormons whose whole spirit was unchurchly and unsacramental.

Such a revolution in the "inmost sanctuary of theology" could not be overlooked and left unchallenged, declared Nevin, by any friend of the evangelical Protestant faith. He had the conviction that if the Protestant Church was to be a genuinely creative religious force and fulfil its role in the divine economy, it must do so in direct continuity with the faith of the Reformation Church which was itself in direct continuity with the preceding history of the Church. The present situation involving its low view of the sacraments demanded, therefore, the attempt to bring to light the true Protestant doctrine of the Eucharist in the Reformation period.

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[3] _Ibid_., p. 52.

Since he is singularly concerned with the defection of the Reformed Church, he proposes to state the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the sixteenth century. The doctrine, he says, evidently grew out of the general religious life of the church itself in its antagonism to the Lutheran doctrine, on the one hand, the low Socinian view on the other, as well as the Roman doctrine. His chief source and authority is Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism. He turns to Calvin not because he was the originator of the Reformed faith, but because he was the "theological organ" which first brought it to clear expression and gave it the form in which it was included subsequently in the symbolical books of the Reformed faith.

Nevin affirms that as a general rule any theory of the Eucharist will be found to be in close accord with the view that is taken of the nature of the union between Christ and his people. This idea is borne out by the sacramental doctrine of the primitive Reformed Church. It held to the concept of a living inward union of the believer with Christ through which they are incorporated into his very nature, and are made to subsist with him in the power of a common life. Accordingly, nothing less than a real participation of his living person is involved in the Lord's Supper. Nevin thus believed that his doctrine of the Christian life as one of a life union with Christ was substantially the doctrine of the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century.

As Calvin and the Reformed Church generally taught the doctrine in the sixteenth century it distinguished itself from Rationalism of the age by asserting that the union of believers with Christ is not simply the union of a common humanity as derived from Adam; or a simply legal union, that is, one in which the benefits of his life are counted to their benefit by divine fiat; or a simply moral union in which they are bound together by inward agreement, sympathy, and affection; or with his divine nature; or with the Holy Spirit as his representative on earth. The Reformed doctrine holds that interest in Christ and his benefits is based on an inward real life unity with his perzon as divine and human. The believer partakes of Christ's merits and benefits only so far as he partakes of his substance and is in direct communication with his person. The people of Christ are inserted by faith into his very life, and,

> . . . the Lord's Supper, forming as it does an epitome of the whole mystery, involves to the worthy communicant an actual participation in the substance of his person under this view. The participation is not simply in his Spirit, but in his flesh and blood also. It is not figurative merely and moral, but real, substantial and essential.[4]

The Reformed Church defined itself in relation to the Church of Rome by rejecting transubstantiation. In this it agreed with the Lutheran doctrine by admitting no change in the elements as a basis of union with Christ.

The Reformed Church defined itself in relation to Lutheran doctrine by rejecting consubstantiation which, says Nevin, posited a true, corporal presence of Christ in, with, and under the elements at the time of their sacramental use, which is imparted to all communicants, with or without faith, by the inherent power of the ordinance itself.

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[4] Ibid., p. 58.

Indeed the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century rejected all thought of a local or corporal presence. The participation of Christ's flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper is spiritual only. According to Calvin, the body of Christ is in heaven, the believer is on earth. By the power of the Holy Ghost, this obstacle is overcome; so that in the sacramental act, while the symbols remain unchanged, the very body and blood of Christ are received in an inward and spiritual way by the worthy receiver to the real nourishment of his life. No material particles are carried over into the believer's person. Calvin, says Nevin, would allow the term real presence if it were understood to be synonomous with true presence, that is, a presence that truly brings Christ in his human as well as his divine nature into communion with the believer. But to guard against any interpretation of real as meaning local or corporal, he would add the qualifying word spiritual. Christ's presence is a spiritual real presence. By the term real, Calvin opposed the notion that Christ's flesh and blood are not made present to the communicant in any way, and the term spiritual precluded the idea that Christ's body and blood are present in a local or corporal manner.

> The communion is spiritual, not material. It is a participation of the Saviour's life. Of his life, however, as human, subsisting in true bodily style. The living energy, the vivific virtue, as Calvin styles it, of Christ's flesh, is made to flow over into the receiver, making him more and

> more one with Christ himself, and thus more and more an heir of the same immortality that is brought to light in his person.[5]

This is the proper sacramental doctrine of the sixteenth century Reformed Church, says Nevin. Two facets of it need to be brought into sharp focus. First, the sacrament carries an objective force; that is, the efficacy it has for[6] the believer "belongs to the institution in its own nature." This does not mean that the sacrament can confer grace in a purely mechanical way; it has no virtue without the exercise of faith by the communicant. It is not simply suggestive, commemorative, or representational. It is not a sign, a picture, deriving its significance from the mind of the beholder. The signs are bound to what they represent by the force of divine appointment, and not subjectively simply, in the mind of the worshipper. The union is not a natural, but a sacramental one. Secondly, the invisible grace of the sacrament is the substantial life of the Savior himself, particularly in his human nature. In the mystery of the Supper, his flesh and blood are really exhibited in their essential force and power, and are really received by every worthy communicant.

Next to Calvin the authoritative symbol for Nevin was the Heidelberg Catechism which epitomized, in his opinion, the ripe mature tradition of the Reformed churches in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The production of the Catechism, says Nevin, was due in large measure to the furor produced by the second phase of the sacramental controversy of the sixteenth century. After the original discussion between Luther and Zuingli the question of the Lord's Supper was allowed to rest for a time. Within the Lutheran Church there occurred subsequently a gradual falling away from the extreme doctrine of Luther, and under the influence of this mitigating sentiment Melanchthon in 1540 revised the articles of the Augsburg Confession on the subject of Christ's presence in the eucharist to affirm nothing more than the communication of his body and blood, instead of declaring them, as in 1530, to be actually under the form of the bread and wine. While he was in Strassburg, Calvin subscribed to the confession in its altered form. By 1552 a group within the Lutheran Church led by Joachim Westphal reacted against the Melanchthonian interpretation as being Calvinistic, and Westphal led an assault on the sacramental theory of the Swiss churches with Calvin at their head.

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

The controversy which ensued was not between the high view of the Lord's Supper held by Luther and the low view commonly attributed to Zuingli. This fact is important, says Nevin, in establishing what was the true doctrine of the Reformed churches, since it was the Calvinistic view which was now recognized as the proper doctrine of the Reformed churches and was bitterly attacked by high-toned Lutheran orthodoxy. All conceded at this point that "the sacrament involves a real participation in the substance of Christ's flesh and blood, that is, in his true human life itself, as the only ground of our salvation."[6] The argument revolved around the question of the "mode" of Christ's presence in the sacrament with the rigid Lutheran party arguing for Luther's interpretation as against Calvin's doctrine of the spiritual real presence. The controversy involved not only Germany at war theologically with Switzerland, but Germany split between those who considered themselves true Lutherans as against those stigmatized as Crypto-Calvinists of the Melanchthonian School.

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[6] Ibid., p. 84.

In the Palatinate the controversy reached such violent proportions that the elector Frederick III, already decided in his own mind in favor of the Calvinistic view of the sacraments, secured the approval of Melanchthon to establish a rule of faith to which all the Palatinate should be required to conform. Two men of German birth, Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Orsinus were selected to produce the proposed statement.

The result of their work was the Heidelberg Catechism which rejects both transubstantiation and consubstantiation. It affirms the sacramental doctrine as generally held by the Reformed of the sixteenth century, says Nevin, namely, that in the supper the believing heart not only embraces the benefits of all the sufferings and death of Christ, but also by virtue of a sacramental bond which unites the signs and the thing signified the believer is united with Christ's body so as to become flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. The writers of the Catechism thus retained the substance of the doctrine as it was held by both Lutheran and Reformed except for the "mode" of Christ's presence as held by the extreme Lutheran wing. In spirit the Catechism was Melanchthonian-Calvinist.

The Catechism was criticised by the strict Lutheran party as saying that there are only bare signs and symbols in the Supper; that Christ is present only according to his efficacy and power; that not Christ's essential body but only an imaginary, figurative or spiritual body is present; that Christ's body is distributed and received only spiritually by worthy receivers, and that the elements are nothing but bare signs to the unworthy who receive them to their own condemnation.

Ursinus in commentary on the Catechism sought to clear up any misunderstanding on these points. He said that the sign and the thing signified are united in the sacrament not by any natural, corporal or local existence, much less by transubstantiation. They are united by a sacramental union, that is, by the bond of the promise added to the bread, and requiring faith for its reception. The signs are bare signs to the unworthy. There is in the Supper a double eating: one is sacramental, that is, the external and corporal receiving of the bread and wine; the other a real or spiritual eating, which is the receiving of Christ's body itself.

> Whence it is apparent that they are falsely accused who thus teach as if they made either the bare signs only to be in the Lord's Supper, or a participation of Christ's death only, or of his benefits, or of the Holy Ghost, excluding the true, real and spiritual communion of the very body of Christ itself.[7]

Nevin concludes thus that the doctrine of the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century, coming to focus in Calvin, given mature expression in the Heidelberg Catechism, held that the Lord's

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[7] Nevin, The Mystical Presence citing Summe of Christian Religion by Zacharias Ursinus (London, 1645), p. 11.

Supper epitomizes the mystery of the mystical union with Christ; that the sacrament has an objective force, its efficacy belonging to the institution in its own nature; that the invisible grace of the sacrament is the substantial life of the Savior, especially as human with all the benefits of the atonement; that the "vivific virtue" of his flesh and blood flow over into the life of the worthy receiver, making his life more and more one with Christ himself; that the communion with Christ's life is spiritual, not material; that it holds through the medium of the Holy Spirit.

At this point Nevin is not concerned about the question as to whether or not he agrees with the sixteenth century Reformed view in its entirety. His concern is to establish what the view was. His next concern is to show that there has been a general falling away from this view among the denominations which represent the Reformed Church by true and legitimate descent. These have been infected by what he calls the "Modern Puritan Theory," as enunciated by Jonathan Edwards, Timothy Dwight, John Dick, Samual Hopkins, Ashbel Green, Bellamy, Albert Ridgely, Barnes. This theology of the Lord's Supper prevails in New England and throughout the Calvinistic churches of this country in general, says Nevin. Whether the "falling away" from the sixteenth century view has been a change for the better or worse, one's particular judgment must allow. But so must all allow the fact of the change.

The Puritan view admits the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but only in the sense that he is present in religious services generally by his Spirit. There is no communication with Christ in the Lord's Supper which is specific in nature.[8] The Puritan view sees no mystery involved in the Lord's Supper. Nevin quotes from Dick, Lectures on Theology as saying that if Calvin and the Reformers generally saw a mystery couched under the ordinance they were using language as incomprehensible to themselves as to others. Nevin contends that the Puritan doctrine uses the language of the old Reformed view in asserting that the sacraments seal and exhibit the grace they represent, but it denies any objective force in the sacrament and changes the sense of these terms to mean that the ordinance is simply the seal of a covenant into which Christ and his people enter, stipulating to be faithful to each other in fulfilling the engagements of a mutual contract in virtue of which certain blessings are made over to the believer. There is no invisible grace in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Nevin quotes Jonathan Edwards as saying that the sacramental elements represent Christ as a party in covenant in the same manner as proxy might represent a prince to a foreign lady in a marriage ceremony. As the lady's taking the proxy is her professing to take the prince as her husband, so our taking the elements is our professing to accept Christ so that we may enjoy all the benefits of his propitiatory sacrifice. The Puritan view denies that there is any real participation in the person of Christ itself in its true power and substance in any form, least of all in the form of his humanity. It will allow no union of the believer with Christ save a moral one, that is, a correspondence of thought and feeling, or a figurative incorporation with his spirit. On this basis, the Lord's Supper provides an occasion "by which the graces of the pious communicant are called into favourable exercise" and his faith is assisted in participating "in the fruits of Christ's love, the benefits of his mediatorial work, his imputed righteousness, the influence of his Spirit, etc.," all abstracted from his person.[9] His presence in the Lord's Supper is limited to his divine nature or to the energy put forth by his Spirit. The Puritan view repudiates as "semi-popish-mysticism" the idea that believers can have any communication with Christ's life as incarnate and now in heaven beyond remembering what Christ endured for man's salvation.

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[8] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence," p. 2669.

The chasm that divides the old Reformed view from the modern Puritan view is deep and wide, says Nevin.

> The modern Puritan view evidently involves a material falling away, not merely from the form of the old Calvinistic doctrine, but from its inward life and force. It makes a great difference, surely, whether the union of the believer with Christ be regarded as the power of one and the same life, or as holding only in a correspondence of thought and feeling; whether the Lord's Supper be a sign and seal only of God's grace in general or the pledge also of a special invisible grace present in the transaction itself; and whether we are united by means of it to the person of Christ, or only to his merits; and whether finally we communicate in the ordinance with the whole Christ, in a real way, or only with his divinity. Such, however, is the difference that stares us in the face. . . .[10]

Moreover, Nevin maintains, the modern Puritan doctrine, as compared with the Calvinistic or Reformed doctrine of the sixteenth century, departs from the substance of the faith of the ancient church on the subject of the Lord's Supper.[11] While it is true that the writings of the Fathers are by no means free from obscurity and contradiction on this subject, it is also true that there was "a certain fundamental substratum" in which the true idea of the sacrament was always at hand, and, which the Church is bound to respect through all ages. Nevin's study of Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Cyprian and Augustine led him to conclude that from the beginning the sacrament was felt to involve not simply a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, nor simply a participation in the benefits of his atonement, but the fact of a communication with his life itself, in its strictly human character. The participation, though real, was spiritual. There was no local, physical or tactual participation in Christ's body, though Cyril of Jerusalem used language which sounds like transubstantiation in the fullest sense.

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[9] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 123.

[10] Ibid., p. 126.

A strong argument which substantiates the argument that the early church held to a real participation in Christ's life as human, says Nevin, is the fact that if Christianity had not included in its very nature the idea of a true substantial union with the human life of Christ, not only signified but embodied and made actual in the mystery of the Supper, such a superstition as that maintained by the Church of Rome could never have come to prevail.

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[11] On this subject see Nevin, The Mystical Presence, pp. 127-38; Nevin, "Cyprian," Mercersburg Review, IV (July, 1552), 379-383; Nevin, "Early Christianity," Mercersburg Review, III (November, 1851), 544-548.

What right has Puritanism to depart from the creed of the sixteenth century and of ancient Christianity on the Lord's Supper? Puritanism claims the right of private judgment against tradition. Private judgment has no right, maintains Nevin, against the judgment of the Reformers and the early church as to the sense of the Bible. Further, he says, the Puritan doctrine has a distinct affinity for Rationalism which reduces religion to the character of flat morality. By effecting to be too spiritual to make much of outward forms and exercises in religion, and by resolving all into exercises of the worshippers' minds, Rationalism makes the subjective to be everything, the objective next to nothing. Hence it holds to low views of the sacraments which are reduced to mere signs, having only such worth as a pious soul may make of them for quickening its own devout thought and feeling. Even the more sound theologians of German rationalism--Doderlein, Knapp, Storr, Reinhard, etc., scarcely get beyond this point of view. Reinhard, for example, reduced the efficacy of the sacrament to the exertion of a salutary influence mysteriously proceeding from Christ's person rather than an actual participation in his life itself.

The modern Puritan theory of the Lord's Supper, in contrast with the old Calvinistic doctrine, is strikingly in harmony with this whole style of thinking. The ground of much American theology at the present, he says, is the same as that occupied by the old rationalistic supernaturalism of Germany, the orthodoxy of Ernesti and Morus, Reinhard and Knapp with only a small part of their learning. The polemic is directed against Congregationalism, as well as the Presbyterians and the Dutch Reformed Church, and some members of his own church. All have fallen away to some extent from the old doctrine.

> Not only is the old doctrine rejected, but it has become almost lost even to the knowledge of the Church. When it is brought into view, it is not believed, perhaps, that the Reformed Church ever held or taught, in fact, any doctrine of the sort; and if it be yielded at length, that Calvin and some others maintained some such view, it is set down summarily as one of those instances in which the work of the Reformation appears to be still clogged with a measure of popish superstition, brought over from that state of darkness and bondage which had just been left behind.[12]

The spirit of sect professes to make supreme account of religion as something personal and experimental; in this way it parades as something highly spiritual in opposition to outward forms and the existing order of the Church generally. In the end, Sectarism involves the worst errors of Rationalism itself in terms of antagonism to the objective realities of Christianity and the exaltation of the subjective. It is no mere coincidence then that the sect spirit and theoretic rationalism have such affinity for each other in their low estimate of the sacraments. The extreme of the sect spirit may be seen in the Quakers who more consistently true to the spiritualistic theory of sectarianism than other sects rejects the sacraments altogether. Indeed the lack of all proper respect for the sacraments may be taken as a just criterion of the spirit of sect as distinguished from the true spirit of the Christian church. In proportion as the sect spirit prevails the sacraments are shorn of all character and reduced to mere outward signs ". . . in the case of which all proper efficacy is supposed to be previously at hand in the inward state of the subject by whom they are received."[13]

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[12] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 109.

> It is particularly significant, moreover, in the aspect now considered, that the Baptist body, as such, is numerically stronger than any other denomination in the country. But the baptistic principle prevails more extensively still; for it is very plain that all true sense of the sacramental value of baptism is wanting in large portions of the church where the sacrament is still retained; and the consequence is, that it is employed to the same extent as a merely outward and traditional form. Along with this, of course, must prevail an unsacramental feeling generally, by which the Lord's supper also is shorn of all its significance and power. Methodism, in this way, may be said to wrong the sacraments (as also the entire idea of the Church), almost as seriously as the Baptist system itself.[14]

Lutheranism in America is infected with the same spirit. It is especially striking in the case of the Lutheran Church which was distinguished in the beginning by the zeal it showed in opposition to what it stigmatized as sacramentarian error. A large part of the Lutheran Church in our own country has been led not simply to moderate the old sacramental doctrine of the Church as spelled out by the Form of Concord; it has abandoned it altogether. As a consequence the whole life of the Church has been brought into contradiction with its own proper principle.

Evidence of this change is glaringly evident in the position taken by Benjamin Kurtz, editor of the Lutheran Observer. Nevin says Kurtz had been trying to push him into the company of the Old Lutherans in America who were laboring to keep alive the doctrine of the Form of Concord in its extreme Lutheran form. The Old Lutherans have no desire to accept my company, says Nevin, since they hold that there was a material and vital difference between Calvin and Luther, that the Reformed and Lutheran view of the participation of Christ is oral and in the Reformed view it is only spiritual. Kurtz, on the other hand, holds that there is very little difference between Calvin and Luther on the sacramental question; both were semi-papistical.

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[13] Ibid., p. 107. [14] Ibid.

> The Observer, if I understand it right, repudiates the idea of a real presence altogether, holding the view of Calvin and the Reformed Church to be quite as "hard a saying" as that of Luther himself . . . that is, it has openly renounced, (if I mistake not its position) not simply what is ordinarily understood by consubstantiation, but the entire idea of an objective force or power of any kind in the sacrament, reducing all simply to the character of a sign, with such spiritual weight only as the good thoughts of the worshipper may be able to bring to it, thus giving up what Luther held to be the central fact of Christianity itself. . . .[15]

Nevin noted that Professor Schmucker of Gettysburg in his translation of the Biblical Theology of Storr and Flatt had an appendix to the section on the Eucharist in which he holds up the view of Reinhard, backed by the authority of Mosheim, as a fair exhibition of the proper Lutheran doctrine. As evidence of the strong power of sectarian prejudice in American Christianity, many Lutherans felt that Schmucker had gone too far in endorsing even this rationalistic interpretation of the doctrine of the real presence. If he has to choose between the rationalism of Kurtz, whose Observer claims to be the representative and principle organ of Lutheranism in the United States, and the Old Lutherans with their precise doctrine of the Form of Concord, Nevin says he prefers the latter. Neither view, however, take any account of recent theological developments. Nevin does not discount the desire of the Old

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[15] J. W. Nevin, "Pseudo-Protestantism," Weekly Messenger, X (August 27, 1845), 2069.

Lutherans to hold fast to the old Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper, but there are two ways of honoring the past. One is to hold to it in terms of blind, rigorous adherence to the letter of the older life. The other is to cling to the inward spirit and life of the old, as a living moving force, to be conserved and carried forward to a better form by way of legitimate, true historical development. This is the course Nevin proposes. "This is true Protestantism, big with hope for the future!"[16]

Having established the fact that there had been a falling away from the Reformed and Lutheran doctrines of the sixteenth century, Nevin raises the question as to why this happened. So far as the Reformed tradition is concerned the modification of the doctrine may have resulted from the fact that various facets of the doctrine as enunciated by Calvin were difficult to understand and harmonize, particularly those which attempted to explain how there could be a real communication with Christ's body now at the right hand of God, while rejecting the mode of Christ's presence in the eucharist as affirmed by the Lutherans and Romans.

Calvin's theory of the Lord's Supper, and that of the sixteenth century, labored under difficulty at several points, says Nevin, "all connected with a false psychology as applied either to the person of Christ or the persons of his people."[17] The question of the mode of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, and the manner in which he is received by his people--the major questions at issue--could have been cleared up if this difficulty had been recognized and adequately dealt with.

Calvin's first mistake was his failure to make a clear distinction between the idea of the organic law which constitutes the proper identity of the human body and the material volume of the body, in the terms which Nevin spells out in his doctrine of man and Christ. Since the principle of the body is not matter or flesh but rather the inward and invisible law of its life, a real communication between the body of Christ and the bodies of his people does not depend upon the transition of Christ's flesh into their persons. Nevin says that Calvin sensed this fact and urged it against both the Lutheran and Roman doctrines, but it was a matter of feeling rather than of scientific apprehension with him. Still he made too much account of Christ's flesh, confined to the right hand of God, as the fountain of the new life to be conveyed to his people. Calvin's attempt to bring the two together in view of their vast separation in space is "awkward and violent," when, for example, he asserts that through the energy of the Holy Ghost, Christ's life is not so much brought down to the believer as the communicant is raised through the exercise of faith to the presence of Christ. Nevin maintains that

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[16] _Ibid._, p. 2069. [17] Nevin, _The Mystical Presence_, p. 156.

> If for the "vivific virtue" of Christ's flesh Calvin had been led to substitute distinctly the idea of the organic law of Christ's human life, his theory would have assumed at once a much more consistent and intelligible form. For in this view, it cannot be said that local, material contact is necessary, to sustain a true and strict continuity of existence, either in the sphere of nature or in that of grace.[18]

Calvin ran into further difficulty by failing to insist on "the absolute unity of what we denominate person, both in the case of Christ himself and in the case of his people"--a cardinal principle in Nevin's Christology and doctrine of man.[19] Here again, says, Nevin, Calvin insisted too much on the life-giving virtue of Christ's flesh as though flesh and soul and divinity too, were not knit inseparably together "so that where the latter form of existence is present in a real way, the other must be present too, so far as its inmost nature is concerned, to the same extent."[20] He had difficulty then tracing the derivation of Christ's life into the person of the believer. To solve the problem he resolved the process into the work of the Holy Ghost, as a sort of foreign or separate agency, to accomplish the end of transferring the vivific virtue of Christ's flesh into the life of the believer. This tended to make Christ's human nature an abstraction, and to make difficult an organic connection between Christ and his people; and it left Calvin open to the criticism of reducing the substance of Christ's life to an influence or spiritual power. Calvin's view of the relation between soul and body in man is an abstract one also. He makes the apprehension of the vivific virtue of Christ's body to be by the soul only, through the power of the Holy Ghost, from whence it extends to the body. This will not do, says Nevin.

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 157. [19] *Ibid.*

> Christ's Person is one, and the person of the believer is one; and to secure a real communication of the whole human life of the first over into the personality of the second, it is only necessary that the communication should spring from the centre of Christ's life and pass over to the centre of ours. This can be only by the Holy Ghost. But the Holy Ghost in this case is not to be sundered from the Person of Christ.[21]

The presence of the Holy Ghost, at the center of the believer's life, is the presence of the theanthropic Person of Christ as one and indivisible.

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[20] Ibid. [21] Ibid., p. 160.

The form in which Calvin places his doctrine of the Lord's Supper is further embarrassed because he fails to make a clear distinction between the individual personal life of Christ and his life in a generic sense. This distinction, as we have seen, is another cardinal facet of Nevin's Christology. Had Calvin made the distinction, says Nevin, he would have been able to assert that the life of Christ in its generic character as "the man" and as fully human, with all its benefits is carried over continually into the persons of his people, without the idea of anything like a local mixture of his individual person as now exalted at the right hand of God.

These three determinations, taken together, improve Calvin's doctrine, Nevin maintains, relieving it of its most serious difficulties, namely, those concerned with the mode of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and the means by which it is affected without involving a local or corporal presence. At the same time, it preserves the true and proper substance of the old doctrine and places it in better form for the understanding. This is a far better alternative than that of discarding the doctrine because of its difficulties as Rationalism and modern Puritanism has done. Nevin justified his modification of Calvin's doctrine by saying that one must cling to the tradition, not as dead tradition, and not in slavish adherence to the letter, but to its life and substance. This is true of any religious truth.

> Its true form is that of history; in which the past, though left behind in one view, is always in another taken up into

> the present, and borne along with it as the central power of its own life.[22]

Like all doctrines, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper has a history of development, and it is incumbent upon the Church to apply to it scientific insights which clarify it.

On this basis, Nevin proposes to place the doctrine of the Lord's Supper into the form which he believes keeps it in strict continuity with the doctrine of the sixteenth century and at the same time makes it more intelligible, symmetrical and consistent.

For the definition of a sacrament and for the definition of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper Nevin turns to the Westminster Shorter Catechism. This may have been a strategic move on Nevin's part, an attempt to bear out his own assertion that Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper dominated later Reformed confessions since the Presbyterianism of the Westminster Assembly coming a century after Calvin in the very sanctuary of Puritanism itself, gave voice to the sixteenth century Reformed doctrine of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in its Calvinistic dress. As there defined "a sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers."[23] Nevin interprets this to mean that a sacrament must comprehend both the signs and the thing signified, namely, the invisible grace. The invisible grace must be present, mysteriously bound to the signs, by Christ's institution, so as to form in the sacramental transaction one and the same presence. The grace is not included in or under the signs in any local or material form, nor is the nature of the signs changed. The union is mystical and sacramental but real and not simply a picture or a form of reminder for the mind. The grace thus present is Christ himself as the only medium of a real communication of his benefits.

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[22] _Ibid_., p. 162.

[23] Quoted from _Westminster Short Catechism_ by Nevin, _ibid_., p. 178.

As defined by the Westminster Confession, "the Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal or carnal manner, but by faith made partakers of HIS BODY AND BLOOD with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."[24] Here, says Nevin, are sensible signs, bread and wine--the visible, and Christ's body and blood with all his benefits--the invisible grace, united in one sacrament. Neither constitutes the sacrament without the other; the ordinance holds in the sacramental transaction itself in which the elements and the grace are bound in mystical, sacramental union.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper has its frame of reference in the atonement wrought out by Christ's death on the cross. The worthy participant receives not simply Christ, but Christ as sacrificed and slain for the sins of the world. The sacrament is not a sacrifice itself, as the Church of Rome holds, but it concentrates in itself the force and meaning of the new covenant established through the shed blood and broken body of Christ. Participation in the Lord's Supper ratifies and advances the interest in the new covenant, the new humanity which believers have already by their union with Christ.

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[24] Ibid., p. 179.

> We need no new atonement; but we do need to fall back perpetually on the one sacrifice for sin, which Christ has already made upon the cross, appropriating the power of it more and more to our souls, as the only ground of our salvation.[25]

This is the logical concomitant of Nevin's assertion that the union with Christ into which the believer enters is one which becomes complete by a gradual process of appropriation of Christ and his benefits by which the individual is more and more united to Christ.

The Lord's Supper as the medium by which the believer progressively appropriates the power of Christ's benefits, "involves a real communication with the person of the Saviour, now gloriously exalted in heaven."[26] The justification of the believer rests, of course, on the objective merits of Christ which becomes his possession by an act of God's free grace. But Christ's merits, as Nevin has contended, have character and validity only as they rooted in, rather than abstracted from, Christ's person. A real life-union with Christ is the only basis, therefore, on which his merits can become the possession of the individual. And progress in the Christian life requires that interest in Christ's merits be renewed and confirmed in the same way. The Lord's Supper is the medium by which Christ and the benefits of his sacrifice are formed more and more in the believer. Further, the believer participates in Christ's life as now exalted at God's right hand. One cannot make a distinction between the crucified Christ and the glorified Christ. To share in his sacrifice one must participate in his person; both are one and the same life. The sacrament is not only a pledge that God will be faithful to his covenant promise; it conveys the grace it signifies.

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[25] _Ibid_., p. 180. [26] _Ibid_.

> The grace, however, namely the merit of Christ's sufferings and death, has a real character only as rooted in a living way in Christ's person; and it can become ours by new application, no farther than Christ himself is made over to us at the same time.[27]

The communication with Christ which the believer has in the Lord's Supper extends to his whole person. We partake not of certain rights and privileges only which have been secured by his sacrifice; or of his divinity only, or of his humanity only as separated from each other, but

> . . . of the veritable, substantial life of the blessed Immanuel himself, as the fountain and channel by which alone all these benefits can be conveyed into our souls . . . of the one life which is the union of both and in virtue of which the presence of the one must involve the same form and to the same extent, the presence of the other.[28]

The presence of the whole Christ is identified objectively with the sacrament itself and under this form is conveyed to the believer. The two, Christ and the signs, are united, not mechanically or locally, but by a mystical and sacramental bond, by the action of the Spirit. Christ communicates himself to the believer, in the sacrament in a "spiritual, central way." That is, his whole life, not his spirit only or his body only, in its inmost substance is conveyed by the power of the Holy Ghost into the very centre of the life of the believer. No material contact or conjunction is involved; the transaction holds altogether in the sphere of the Spirit.

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 181. [28] *Ibid.*, pp. 181-82.

This real communication with the whole Christ, as the power of a new creation, extends itself organically to the entire life of the believer. It has efficacy only in the case of believers, where the life of union with Christ has already commenced. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper has no power to convert, and its grace cannot be appropriated unless the believer exercises faith. This does not mean that the virtue of the sacrament is put into it by the faith of the recipient, nor does it mean that the force of the sacrament consists in the "actings of our faith, or penitence, or love, or any other gracious affection, that may be called into exercise at the time. . . . The force of the sacrament is in the sacrament itself. Our faith is needed, only as the condition that is required to make room for it in our souls."[29]

The doctrine as he holds it in this form, says Nevin, leaves absolutely no room for the idea of transubstantiation or consubstantiation. Christ's presence is not identified with the symbols but with the sacramental transaction as a whole. Christ's presence is not corporeal but spiritual. Christ's presence is not the presence of his body and blood alone, but of the substance of his whole person--a unity of the divine and human--as the ground of the new life. Christ's presence is not to the soul of the believer simply but to his whole person.

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[29] Ibid., p. 183.

Nevin has taken what he holds to be the substance of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as held by the Reformed Church of the sixteenth and reinterpreted it in the light of his concept of the organic unity of Christ's person, his nature as universal or generic in its humanity, his thesis that the essence of the body is the law of its life, and his concept of the organic unity of the individual person. These concepts enable him to say that the whole of the theanthropic person of Christ in the form of the law of his life, in its universal or generic aspect, with all the benefits of his life and death can pass over into the total life of the believer in the Lord's Supper, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, itself the spirit of Christ, without any corporal or material contact with the person of Christ. In this way he squares the theory of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper with the doctrine that the glorified body of Christ is now at the right hand of God. He feels that in this interpretation he has overcome the basic objections to the Lutheran and Reformed doctrines on this point as expounded in the period of the Reformation, and to the Roman doctrine as still taught. Further, in terms of the modern insights of psychology, and of the newer Christocentric theology, he has brought into harmonious and psychologically defensible form the doctrine of Christ, the mystical union and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The question of the Doctrine of the Lord's Supper was one of the first issues which aroused antagonism towards Nevin's views in the German Reformed Church. We have previously noted the resolution of the Philadelphia Classis to the Synod of 1845 which accused Nevin of having taught in "Catholic Unity" that Christ is present bodily in the Lord's Supper. The resolution contended that Christ is present in the Supper only in a symbolic sense, not a literal sense. Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, as in the Church, is not human but divine and spiritual. Synod had absolved the professors of the charge that they taught a bodily presence, and agreed with them that a spiritual presence may be taken to mean that Christ's presence in the Supper is just as real as when he stood among his disciples in the days of his flesh. Berg, however, denied that the Lord's Supper contained any intrinsic grace or that they included the thing signified as well as the signs. "If they are visible signs of an invisible grace," protested Berg, "they do not contain in themselves that grace, even as objective institutions."[30]

The same misunderstanding arose after the publication of The Mystical Presence inside and outside of the Reformed Church. We have previously noted Kurtz charge that the doctrine taught the bodily presence of Christ in the Supper. Nevin was again taken to task for teaching the doctrine by Berg and his coterie of followers in The Philadelphia Classis.

Nevin's most severe critic outside his own church on his exposition of the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper was his former teacher at Princeton, Dr. Charles Hodge. It was almost two years after the publication of The Mystical Presence--April 1848--before Hodge took note of it, "only a fortnight ago," he says, after he had been called upon to investigate the question with which Nevin had dealt, namely, what is the true doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper. Hodge notes that he was a long time getting around to his work because "it requires the stimulus of a special necessity to carry on through such a book."[31] This confession itself, says Nevin, speaks against Hodge's competency to judge his book, since it belies a lack of concern not only for the sacramental question but for the Christological question and the whole idea of the church which is involved in it. Hodge has further betrayed his lack of interest in the subject by taking most of the quotations which he uses to support his own position from The Mystical Presence and then putting his own interpretation on them.

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[30] J. F. Berg, "Protest," Weekly Messenger, XI (November 5, 1845), 2110.

While acknowledging the assistance Nevin has given him in pursuing his problem, Hodge says he finds himself in complete disagreement with Nevin both on the true doctrine of the Reformed Church, and on the historical issues involved. He notes the difficulties involved in getting at the sixteenth century Reformed view of the Lord's Supper. The subject itself is mysterious. All Christians agree that the Lord's Supper exhibits and confirms the union of believers with Christ--a vital and more than a merely moral union arising from agreement and sympathy. All agree that the union is a mystery and for this reason call it the "mystical union." When it comes to defining the mode of receiving Christ another problem arises. Does the believer partake of the human nature, the real flesh and blood of Christ? The Romanists and Lutherans answered in the affirmative; the whole Reformed Church answered in the negative. The Reformed here asserted that by receiving the flesh and blood of Christ is meant "receiving their virtue or efficacy," but they could not agree whether it is "their virtue as broken and shed, that is, their sacrificial virtue," or whether it is "a mysterious, supernatural efficacy flowing from the glorified body of Christ in heaven."[32] A further source of difficulty lies in the fact that almost all the Reformed symbols were formed as compromises with the fond hope, especially on Calvin's part, that Lutherans, Zuinglians and Calvinists could adopt them. With regard to the Lord's Supper the terms "presence, real, true, flesh and blood, substance, etc.," are all employed in many cases in an ambiguous manner. In addition to these difficulties where is one to look for an authoritative statement of the Reformed Faith. Hodge rejects Nevin's choice of Calvin as the great authority for the alternative scheme of examining first the authorities which represent the Swiss view, then those which represent Calvin's view and finally those in which both parties concurred.

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[31] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence," p. 2641. Hodge's article is to be found under the title "Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper," The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, XX (Philadelphia: 1848). Nevin's reply is to be found under the same title in the Mercersburg Review, II (September, 1850), 123.

Nevin objected to this whole scheme on the ground that it completely wrenches the whole study out of its historical context by making the Zuinglian symbols coordinate with the Calvinistic as though both ran parallel in time and at last settled into a sort of joint result agreeing with the Zuinglian doctrine. He held that one must make a careful distinction between those preceding and those following Calvin. In this sequence one sees the Zuinglianizing element giving away gradually to the Calvinistic which came to be acknowledged as the ruling life of all the later Reformed Confessions. One has the feeling that Nevin has the better of the argument here. In The Mystical Presence and in his reply to Hodge he carefully traces the history of the controversy over the Lord's Supper from its early stages between Zuinglians and Lutherans where the argument was over the question of whether the sacrifice of Christ or the presence of his glorified life was the great object of appropriation in the ordinance, to its later stages over the mode of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper as among extreme Lutherans--Westphal and Hesshus--who held to Luther's view of the nature and mode of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper against the Melanchthonion-Calvinist view or the Lutheran doctrine modified by Calvinism with reference to the mode of Christ's presence; and finally to the Megandrian-Zuinglian view which held to an extreme Zuinglian interpretation of the Lord's Supper as commemorative only. The Melanchthonion-Calvinist's view carried the field so far as the Reformed confessions are concerned, according to Nevin.

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[32] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge on the Mystical Presence."

Hodge, however, proceeded to arrive at his own estimate of the Reformed faith on the basis of his proposed scheme. He found that the Reformed generally excluded any idea of a local or bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but affirmed that

> There is . . . a presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper, not local but spiritual; not for the senses but for the mind and to faith; not of nearness but of efficacy. This presence (as Zuingli said, "if they want words") the Reformed were willing to call real, if by real was understood not essential or corporal, but true and efficacious, as opposed to imaginary or ineffective.[33]

The Reformed held that the term presence is a relative one. A thing may be present as to virtue and efficacy which is at a great distance locally, as for example the sun and its warmth. Christ's body and blood are present in the signs in their virtue and efficacy, but there is no participation in Christ's body or in his human nature as such. His glorified body is in heaven. However, the Reformed all agreed that our union with Christ is a real union and that in the Lord's Supper the believer receives Christ and not his benefits merely. But how? By the words "flesh and blood" was meant "the virtue, efficacy, life-giving power of his body" and not the material particles of Christ's body.[34] On this point, however, there was a difference of opinion. Some meant by it the virtue of Christ's body, as broken and his blood as shed, that is, "their sacrificial, atoning efficacy."[35] Others, Calvin among them, insisted that

> . . . besides this there was a vivifying efficacy imparted to the body of Christ by its union with the divine nature, and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, the believer in the Lord's Supper and elsewhere received into his soul and by faith this mysterious and supernatural influence.[36]

Hodge was of the opinion that the doctrine of sacrificial efficacy had higher authority since it has symbolical authority in its favor; is the only view that harmonizes with the other doctrines of the church, especially the doctrines of the Reformed Church that we receive Christ as fully through the ministry of the Word as in the Lord's Supper, and that our union with Christ since the incarnation is the same in nature as that enjoyed by the saints under the old dispensation. Nevin's position subverts this doctrine, it being obvious that any power due to the hypostatical union and flowing from Christ's body in heaven could only be of benefit to believers since the incarnation. The doctrine that believers share in the vivifying efficacy of Christ's body died out of the church, having been a foreign interest and having had no roots in the Reformed system.

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[33] Ibid., June 7, 1848, p. 2649.

[34] Ibid. [35] Ibid. [36] Ibid.

Further, the Reformed agreed that there is no special benefit to be had in the Lord's Supper which cannot be obtained elsewhere. That is, they made a distinction between "spiritual and sacramental manducation," meaning that what is received in the Lord's Supper through the signs is received by faith elsewhere without them.[37] In the case of the Lord's Supper, however, the mode of "reception is by the soul, through faith not through the mouth, by the power of the Holy Ghost," and the effect of believing reception is "union with Christ and the consequent reception of his benefits."[38] Since the Reformed allowed no participation in Christ's human nature, in what sense is the mystical union a participation in Christ's life? Hodge says it is to be understood in the same sense in which Paul understands a husband and wife to be one flesh. It is a spiritual union.

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[37] Ibid.   [38] Ibid., July 5, 1848, p. 2665.

> If the intimate relationship, the identification of feelings, affections and interests between a man and his wife, if their spiritual union justifies the assertion that they are one flesh, far more may be the same thing be said of the spiritual relation between Christ and his people, which is more ultimate, sublime and mysterious, arising as it does from the inhabitation of one and the same spirit, and producing not only a union of feeling and affection, but of life.[39]

Believers are one with Christ and with each other, says Hodge, "not because they have a common human nature, or because they all partake of the humanity of Christ," as Nevin claims, but because "they all have one spirit."[40] This is the Reformed Doctrine of the mystical union and its relation to the Lord's Supper.

This position is substantially that which Nevin brands as the modern Puritan system. Dr. Hodge is correct, says Nevin, when he affirms that the Reformed taught no doctrine of the local or bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but he is wrong when he implies that Nevin had taught the doctrine in the *Mystical Presence*. To conclude further, as Hodge does, that the only alternative to a local presence is a presence to "the intelligence" is to interpret Calvin and the sixteenth century generally in the subjective thought patterns of modern Puritanism.[41] Dr. Hodge is correct also when he says that the Reformed doctrine of the Eucharist in the sixteenth century shows two phases, sometimes emphasizing the sacrificial, atoning afficacy of Christ's death and at other times the vivific power of his life. This was the issue between Luther and Zuingli, each holding stubbornly to what was a one-sided emphasis, "Zuingli insisting on the *sacrifice* of Christ as the great object of appropriation in the ordinance; Luther on the presence of his glorified life."[42] Hodge is wrong when he contends that the sacrificial view triumphed and then insists on tearing the two apart. A union of the two views actually forms the sacramental creed of the Reformed Church as it matured in Calvin's thinking.

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[39] *Ibid*. [40] *Ibid*. [41] *Ibid*., June 21, 1848, p. 2657.

> It is the misery of our modern divinity, on the other hand, that it has so widely fallen away again from this divine synthesis, sundering the atonement of Christ from its necessary ground in his life and then arraying the one against the other as though they were opposite and rival powers.[43]

For Nevin the real efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ lay in the fact that it is available to man through participation in Christ's whole life. The merit of Christ for Calvin was not as it seems to be for Dr. Hodge, "a mere thought in God's mind to be set over to the credit of sinners in an outward way; it was something real and concrete, which as such could never be sundered from the life to which it belonged; on which account this life itself must be made to reach over to all who are to have the benefit of it as the necessary and only bearer of such grace. Christ first, and then his merit; the life of the Son of man made ours, in order to a true and full interest in the wealth of this life . . ."[44] In this form, says Nevin, the doctrine passed into later Reformed confessions. Actually, says Nevin, here we have the old view of Zuingli, as to the sacrificial efficacy of Christ's body and blood, completed by development into the view of Calvin. After Calvin there is "but one class of authoritative symbols and these are all Zuingli-Calvinistic. . . ."[45] In none of these is there the radical disjunction between Christ's sacrifice and his life for which Dr. Hodge contends. Nevin agrees with Hodge that the sacrificial doctrine did eventually prevail, but this was not a matter of "healthy growth," or a sloughing off of an alien element, but rather a falling away from the proper life of the Reformed faith of the sixteenth century. This is precisely the point Nevin has been trying to get over to the Protestant Church of his day.

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[42] *Ibid.*, June 7, 1848, p. 2649. [43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*, June 14, 1848, p. 2653.

There is no argument either, says Nevin, over the fact that the reception of Christ in the Lord's Supper is by faith and not by oral manducation. But here faith is something more than "mind presence" or "the mind of the subject brought simply into a certain relation to the general truth of the gospel."[46] Faith lays hold of, apprehends the reality present in an objective sense in the sacrament. There is no argument either about the fact that the Reformed did not confine our participation in Christ's life to the Lord's Supper. But they also certainly made the sacrament "a special and extraordinary mystery."[47]

There is no argument either, says Nevin, about the doctrine that the union of the believer with Christ is a real union and a spiritual, not material or physical, union. But to say that the union holds in virtue of the fact that both are inhabited by the same Spirit is to reduce the union to the general operation of the Holy Ghost upon men, and to leave the life of Christ wholly outside the life of the believer. To go further and say that the union does not include the humanity of Christ's life is to introduce a "dualistic breach" of "a decidedly Nestorian aspect" into the interpretation of the person of Christ.[48] All this is to deny a real communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper and to fly in the face of Calvin and all the Reformed symbols after his date.

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[45] Ibid., June 28, 1848, p. 2661.

[46] Ibid., June 7, 1848, p. 2649.

[47] Ibid.

There is no argument either, says Nevin, regarding Hodge's contention that the Reformed, Calvin included, thought that our union with Christ since the incarnation is the same in nature with that enjoyed by the Old Testament saints. But this does not amount to saying that the sacrament involves no union with Christ's human nature, this having been impossible before the incarnation. Calvin had this very difficulty to deal with in his argument with Westphal. He asserted there that though Christ's flesh had not yet been created, it still became efficacious for the saints of the Old Testament. Only their mode of eating was different from ours. In our time the manducation is substantial, which it could not be then.[49]

Hodge's analysis of the marriage relation and the mystical union shows how flat and hyperbolic his interpretation of Paul is against the literal interpretation of Calvin who held that Paul's analogy is to be understood in terms of the union of Adam and Eve. "As Eve was formed out of the substance of Adam, so as to be as it were a part of himself, we likewise in order to be true members of Christ, coalesce with him by communication of his substance into one body."[50]

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[49] Ibid., July 5, 1848, p. 2665. [50] Ibid.

Nevin rises to the heights of indignation when he contemplates Hodge's contention that there is no objective grace in, no power tied to the sacraments, and that "their efficacy is referred neither to any virtue in them nor in him that administers them, but solely to the attending operation or influence of the Holy Spirit, precisely as in the case of the word," and hence "may be exerted without them."[51] True, said Nevin, the Reformed denied that the outward elements, in their own separate nature, possess any saving efficacy, and affirmed that only the accompanying grace of the Spirit can make them of any account. But they also affirmed that by sacramental union, the elements are bound to the reality they represent.

> The sacrament is not the elements used in its celebration, nor the outward service only in which this consists, but a divine transaction, comprehending in itself, along with such visible and earthly forms, the invisible power of the very verities themselves that are symbolically represented.[52]

Dr. Hodge has clearly shown, says Nevin, the radical divergence of the modern Puritan system from the Reformed doctrine of the sixteenth century on the eucharist. As against the old doctrine which "made the eucharist the bond of union with Christ's life as well as a memorial of his death" Hodge has made of the sacrament "a monumental ordinance simply, through which faith as a mental act lays hold of the atonement once made on Calvary. . . ."[53]

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[51] Ibid., July 12, 1848, p. 2669.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

Hodge's theory completely divorces Christ's sacrifice from his life--a divorce which he considers a clear gain. This has implications for the whole of theology, says Nevin. By severing the atonement from its true and living ground in the Lord's Supper, one alters the whole Christian system by resolving it into a doctrine to be apprehended only in the way of thought, instead of allowing it to be a concrete fact, a new order of existence imbedded into the very constitution of life itself. This theory sinks the sacraments into mere monumental and moral signs. It denies that there was any truth either in the Catholic or Lutheran doctrines. In fact, with regard to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper,

> The truth of the Reformed confession is to be sought, on the side towards Lutheranism, and under the sense of old Catholic ideas that are so deeply lodged in its constitution, not by falling away from it completely, in the style too common at the present time.[54]

Nevin noted that Calvin's system contained incompatible elements, namely, the sacramental doctrine and the doctrine of the decrees. The doctrine of the decrees which Calvin makes to be the central principle of Christian salvation is in plain contradiction to the entire idea of Christianity, says Nevin, and no logical force has ever been able to save it from various qualifications in the history of Calvinism itself. The German mind always recoiled from it with a sort of instinctive dread, and the erection of the Reformed standard in Germany in no case implied agreement with Calvin's theory of the decrees. The only Calvinism involved in it, is that which stands in the doctrine of the sacraments. The doctrine of the sacraments derived no benefit from the connection in which it stood in Calvin's thought with the idea of predestination, and the result has been that the one has a tendency continually to overthrow the other.

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[54] Ibid.

> Hence it is no doubt, that in those sections of the Reformed Church where the doctrine of the decrees has been regarded as the main interest in theology, the original Calvinistic view of the sacraments has fallen more and more into the shade, so as to be frequently of no authority whatsoever. And yet the doctrine of the decrees, as held by Calvin never belonged at all to the constitution of the Reformed Church as such; whereas all the sacramental doctrine entered in truth into its distinctive character as a confession.[55]

Hodge, however, maintained that the doctrine of the decrees was the central principle of the Reformed Confessions. Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper was a concession to the Lutherans. Only one side of it, that which laid stress on the sacrificial efficacy of Christ's death as the object appropriated in the Lord's Supper, was in harmony with the other doctrines of the Reformed Church. The idea of a life-giving power in the sacrament was, therefore, an "uncongenial foreign element" which subsequently died out of the system altogether.

The point at issue between Hodge and Nevin involves thus the question of whether Calvin's doctrine of the decrees were central to the Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century or whether the doctrine of the sacraments as held in common by Lutherans and Calvinists and modified by Calvin's concept of the mode of Christ's presence became the central principle. According to Hodge's logic it follows that if one emphasizes the decrees, the doctrine of Christ's sacrificial efficacy becomes the only compatible sacramental doctrine. Nevin admits that the course of events followed this logic after the sixteenth century, but that it had gone against the facts and had been a loss rather than a gain. The manner in which Nevin marshalled his arguments leave one with the conviction that he had the better of the argument when he says that the later Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century culminating in the Heidelberg Catechism taught Calvin's view rather than Zuingli's. One must allow also, and Hodge admits it, that the modern Puritan theory had departed from the Reformed doctrine of the sixteenth century since they did combine for a time the Zuinglian and Calvinist doctrine. Hodge made no attempt to defend the sacramental doctrine of reigning American Protestantism against Nevin's charge that it had a distinct affinity for rationalistic and sectarian modes of thought.

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[55] J. W. Nevin, "Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper," Mercersburg Review, II (September, 1850), 523.

Nevin is happy to note that his analysis of the sixteenth century Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper is supported in the second volume of Das Dogma Von Heiligen Abendmahl Und Seine Geschicte by Dr. August Ebrard, professor of theology at Zurich in the service of the Reformed Church. Dr. Ebrard, says Nevin, maintains that the Reformed doctrine holds to a real communion with Christ's whole life, in the new nature of the Christian generally, and in the sacrament of the Eucharist in particular. Ebrard's first volume was in Nevin's hands when he write The Mystical Presence.

The second volume of the work which came into Nevin's hands in 1850 further confirms the position Nevin took in The Mystical Presence, particularly, says Nevin, in regard to his contention that the sacramental controversy of the sixteenth century involved a process of development which resulted in the combining of two emphases which had been separately advanced in two phases of the doctrinal controversy, namely, the emphasis in the atoning efficacy of Christ's death and the emphasis on the vivific virtue of Christ's life. The union of these two views became Reformed orthodoxy. Nevin suggests that the fact that both he and Ebrard came to the same conclusion through wholly separate inquiry gives force to his interpretation. Further, says Nevin, both in correspondence and through a review of The Mystical Presence Ebrard has acknowledged his full agreement with the views expressed there, and has considered him as defending the Melancthonian-Calvinist conception of the doctrines of the mystical union and the Lord's Supper against the Lutherans of North America. Ebrard notes that strangely enough North American Lutherans, especially Kurtz and the Lutheran Observer hold not Luther's views but Zuingli's. Here is a curious thing, says Nevin, that the Reformed must uphold the doctrine of the real presence in the Lord's Supper, as much a Lutheran as a Reformed doctrine, against the Lutherans. So completely has Puritanism in America destroyed all feeling for the old doctrine that even the Lutheran Church sees in Nevin and Ebrard a leaning towards Puseyism and Rome.

The second volume of Ebrard's work also showed Nevin that his correction of Calvin's faulty psychology of the person of Christ and his explanation of how the substance of Christ's life reaches over into the life of the believer was actually Calvin's intention. Ebrard maintains, that when Calvin talks about the glorified body of Christ he does not mean the material substance of his body. The substance of Christ which is received in the Lord's Supper is the active power of his glorified body. Thus the communication of the body of Christ according to Calvin, is not a communication of matter or flesh but of the dynamic power of his life. It is the "natural germ" or, as Nevin would put it, the "organic law of his life" both as divine and corporeal which is communicated to the believer. Christ's glorified body is not matter but universal power, and it works not mechanically but dynamically. The power of his life as one, the source of his existence, flows over into the life of the believer as one by the power of the Spirit. This explanation of Ebrard's counters Nevin's fear that Calvin placed too much emphasis on Christ's flesh, confined to the right hand of God. It becomes clear, says Nevin, that for Calvin the vivific virtue of Christ's body referred not to "his substance materially considered," but rather "the active power of his own proper human life itself."[56] Ebrard also cleared up Nevin's fears that Calvin was rather "awkward and violent" in his attempts to explain how the virtue of Christ's glorified body could reach over into the life of the believer in view of their vast separation in space. Nevin had understood Calvin to say that by the power of the Holy Ghost, the soul of the believer was literally carried up to the place of Christ's body. Ebrard convinced Nevin that Calvin had in mind neither an ascent of the soul to Christ nor a descent of Christ's life to the believer in a spatial sense. What Calvin actually meant was,

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[56] Ibid., p. 502.

> The soul must be directed subjectively, in the sacrament, to heaven, or the higher sphere in which Christ dwells, and not to the sphere of matter and sense, for the accomplishment of the grace it seeks; while on the other side, the power of Christ objectively meets this upward look of faith, by actually breaking through the limitations of space, and from the bosom of his own higher order of life itself, causing the vigor of his glorified humanity to reach over into the persons of his people in an immediate and direct way.[57]

The question of the nature and efficacy of baptism was secondary to the Lord's Supper for Nevin though his doctrine of baptism was of a piece with his sacramental, churchly theology.

As between the churchly view Nevin espoused and the "no-church" view which he held to be the position of reigning American protestantism the basic question was whether baptism is for the remission of sins or whether baptism is the sign of a spiritual work which has already taken place. Is baptism a sacrament, which imparts grace, or is it only a law which Christians obey because the New Testament enjoins it, a badge of profession which is limited to believers? At issue between the two points of view also is the question of infant baptism. If it is to be limited to believers, either on the theory that it is a public profession of faith, or an effective means of guaranteeing that only true believers will be admitted to the fellowship of the church, does this presuppose that there is no place in the economy of church salvation for infants? If one grants infants the right of baptism, what is the significance of the act? What is subsequently to be required of the infant baptised by way of professing to his own faith? Of less importance than these questions, though involved also in any correct doctrine, is the question of the mode of baptism.

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[57] _Ibid._, p. 504.

As in the case of the Lord's Supper Nevin's study of the church fathers and reformers had convinced him that from the earliest times of the church through the Reformation baptism fitted into the general sacramental pattern as carrying in it a mystical force, having efficacy and value for the salvation of the individual which derived not from the mind of the worshipper but from the power of the sacramental transaction itself.

> Baptism has been held thus to be for the remission of sins, and to carry with it in some way an actual making over to the subject, on the part of God or Christ, of the grace it signifies and represents. So through the whole period before the Reformation the mystical sense of the sacrament, and its relation to the new birth, are everywhere acknowledged, and appear intertwined with the universal system both of worship and of doctrine. The use of infant baptism in particular turns altogether on the assumption of such an objective force in the ordinance, and must be surely undermined indeed, sooner or later, wherever this assumption is removed.[58]

The sixteenth century, he continues, had no thought of breaking with the faith of the previous ages on this point. Luther insisted on baptismal regeneration in the surest terms, and Calvin, while more guarded, strongly maintained the supernatural power of baptism as fully parallel with the virtue he declared to be present in the holy eucharist.

Nevin believed that baptism, that is the whole transaction, conveys a sacramental grace which is for the remission of sins. His doctrine proceeded on the basis of his definition of Christianity as a new order of life constituted by the fact of the Incarnation and apprehended by and continued in the church within which men are saved. Within this framework baptism is a medium or channel of grace, wherein are "a visible terrene sign and an invisible celestial grace; not related simply as corresponding facts, brought together by human thought; but the one actually bound to the other in the way of most real and mystical or sacramental union, causing the last to be objectively at hand in one and the same transaction with the first."[59] For Nevin, baptism was no mere sign of profession or rite of initiation into the society of believers but a real means of grace, for the remission of sins, which introduces the individual into the mystery of the new birth.

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[58] J. W. Nevin, "Anglican Crisis," Mercersburg Review, III (July, 1851), 370.

Very early in the discussion of the sacramental issue one of Nevin's brethren pinned him down with a specific question as to the precise meaning of the term baptismal grace. "Does the professor understand by 'baptismal grace' the same as is commonly denoted by the phrase 'baptismal regeneration'? In other words, does he believe that baptism, when rightly administered is invariably and immediately accompanied with regeneration?"[60] Nevin replied that he ordinarily carefully avoided the use of the word regeneration in talking about the efficacy of baptism. If by regeneration is meant a change in the subject resulting from baptism, he certainly did not hold to the idea. He would, however, hold to the term "baptismal grace" as an item of faith, a fact which did not require that he should be able to define clearly in what the grace consists.

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[59] J. W. Nevin, "Noel on Baptism," Mercersburg Review, II (May, 1850), 244.

[60] J. W. Nevin, "Baptismal Grace," Weekly Messenger, XII (August 11, 1847), 2478.

> Whatever of force there may be in the constitution of the church, objectively considered, for the purposes of our salvation, it is by baptism that we come first regularly and fully within its range.[61]

His correspondent was not satisfied with Nevin's answer and asked whether the grace communicated by baptism is saving grace or is it not? And if it be something short of saving grace wherein does it differ from the view with which he dissents? If grace that actually saves the subject is implied in this question, Nevin replied, the answer is no. If the sense of the question be grace that is able through faith to save the answer is yes. Baptism is a divine act having force in its own nature for the end it contemplates. It is not a mere human act of no force except as a dead token only of something else. One gathers that Nevin holds baptism to be a divine act by which one is comprehended within the Church and made the recipient of all the saving power of Christ's life in the Church. Its efficacy consists in the fact that it brings one within the sphere of grace.

The antithesis of this doctrine is the Baptist doctrine, says Nevin, which reduces baptism to a sign only of Christian profession which has no significance except it is preceded by the grace it represents as already at hand in the believer, "purely an outward institution, the whole sense and value of which turn on its giving the believer an opportunity to show his obedience to the authority by which it has been appointed."[62] This view nullifies the idea of an objective grace in the sacrament. It allows a certain relation to grace, but only in the sense that baptism suggests something spiritual to the human mind. It is a species of Jewish legalism. It denies the true idea of the Church. Other Protestant groups, for example, New England Puritanism, make a great point of arguing against the Baptists, particularly on the point of the proper mode of baptism and the question of infant baptism. But these points of contention are really irrelevant since both sides start from substantially the same false premise about the nature of the sacraments, that is, both deny the nature of the sacraments as apprehending actually and truly an inward yet objective grace. These Protestants are one extreme, as holding slavishly to the letter of what they claim to be the Biblical doctrine. At the other extreme are the Quakers who reject the rite altogether. Despite the gulf between them, they have an affinity for each other, both being constitutionally rationalistic, both vitiating the sacrament of its true significance, one ending in infidelity, the other in lifeless mechanical form.

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[61] *Ibid*.

On the question of the mode of baptism, Nevin felt that the Baptists and others who stickled for immersion had the better of the argument since this practice corresponds more nearly to the original sense of the word baptize and to the practice of the early church and the Reformers. But the Baptists who immerse make a fetish of following the letter of the gospel and do so in a purely outward way thus robbing the sacrament of its true significance by turning it into a mere ceremony. On the other hand, the Puritan practice of reducing the quantity of water used in baptism to the narrowest practicable measure, on the ground that all depends on the spirit and the thought of the spiritual work of which the act is a symbol and sign, comes uncomfortably close to the Quaker doctrine. The force of the symbol does not turn on the amount of water employed, but a true sacramental feeling must always produce a due regard to the idea of the ordinance as joined with water used in a plentiful and free way.

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[62] Nevin, "Noel on Baptism," p. 244.

The crux of his quarrel with the Baptist view lay in the question of infant baptism. Here it is that his own doctrine comes to focus. The grand argument for or against infant baptism, he maintains, lies not in the letter of the Scriptures, but in the life of Christianity itself, the true idea of the Church, the mystery of Christ as the second Adam in whom redemption and salvation are brought to pass for the race. Once one grasps the true nature of Christianity as a new order of life stemming from the Incarnation in which men are comprehended in order to be saved, then, one must see that this fact is fully commensurate with the fact of humanity itself through all stages from infancy to old age. It is inconceivable that one half of humanity, composed of infants and children in their early years, should be cut off from the benefits of Christianity. The real question, says Nevin, is not simply,

> Can infants be saved if they should happen to die? but this rather: Is there any room for them, living or dying in the concrete mystery of the new creation, in the communion of Christ's Mediatorial Life, in the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church? Does the nature of the Second Adam take in one half of the necessary life of the race only, while it hopelessly excludes the other?[63]

The answer, says Nevin is that Christianity takes up into itself the entire compass of the old creation. In harmony with the principle that underlies the Jewish covenant which bound the state of the children to that of their parents, Christianity, the end of all other covenants, embraces children as well as adults into its bosom "thus covering with its grace the whole extent of our nature as it lies defiled and defaced by sin."[64] If infants are not comprehended in the power of sin there might be some reason for excluding them from the law of life in Christ. It is a monstrous thing, said Nevin, to make infants participate of the curse and then deny them access to the salvation wrought by Christ, as an objective fact, because they have no power yet to think, to understand, to believe, to accomplish in full the subjective side of this salvation.

Infant baptism is the initiative of all that is comprehended in a true church life as a process of salvation and a preparation for heaven. Infant baptism assumes the possibility of educational religion as its own necessary complement. The idea of confirmation is required to bring it to its full and complete sense.

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[63] Ibid., p. 249. [64] Ibid., p.250.

As a mere abstract rite or usage infant baptism can never be defended. It can be defended and thrive only in the context of what Nevin has defined as the "Church System." Within this context it is to be seen as the beginning of a process which the church must carry forward and complete. It assumes the possibility of educational religion as a necessary complement. It includes confirmation as a part of the process.

> The idea of confirmation is required to bring it to its true and full sense. Where faith remains at all in its character as a sacrament, it will be felt to carry in it a demand for such personal acknowledgment and response on the part of its subject, at the proper time, under the hand of the Church; which in such case will not be viewed as a new and independent transaction, however, but rather as the natural and suitable close of the baptismal act itself. Let the idea of confirmation, on the other hand, be strange to the mind of any part of the Church, and the continuity lost sight of thus that should hold of right between the beginning of infant baptism and its proper end, and it will be found that to the same extent the institution itself is shown of its significance and turned into an empty form.[65]

Nevin draws back from asserting specifically the power of baptism in the case of infants beyond asserting that it initiates them into the church, the repository and medium of the salvation wrought by Christ, making them participants in the law of life in Christ. Nevin's reticence to state specifically the power of baptism in the case of infants is quite interesting in contrast to his assertion of its place in the sacramental system and in contrast to his positive affirmation of the results of participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

> This question is now moving the Church of England to its very foundations; and it is one undoubtedly of the most profound and far-reaching interest for the general theology and

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 263.

> church life of the age. But we meddle not with it here, any further than to assert the fact of grace objectively present in the sacrament under some form. . . . We know that there are great difficulties attending the subject of baptismal grace. But let us not think to escape these by throwing ourselves into the arms of Rationalism. Whether we can solve them satisfactorily or not, we are still bound, in the way of preliminary faith, to accept the mystery of such grace itself; since the only alternative to this is to give up the doctrine of the holy sacraments altogether, in the old church sense, and so to bring in another gospel.[66]

Nevin noted that the "Gorham Case" now agitating the Church of England had significance not only for that church but for protestantism in general. The controversy involves not simply the use of the word regeneration, or some one sense of the word, or the doctrine of the English Service Book. It concerns the whole idea of baptismal grace and the conception of sacramental grace in any form, as a mystical and supernatural virtue going along with the sacraments in distinction from any state or act accompanying them in the mind of the participant.

> The question in truth is thus central in its nature. It involves at bottom the whole force of the alternative, Church or No-Church . . . sacrament or no sacrament. . . .[67]

Nevin's views of infant baptism as against the Baptists and New England Congregationalism are well defined in his review of Horace Bushnell's Discourses on Christian Nurture published in 1846. Nevin applauded Bushnell's criticism of the unchurchly individualism of American Christianity which operated on the assumption that a child is to grow up in sin and be converted when he come to mature age. He wholeheartedly endorsed Bushnell's thesis that the child is to grow up as a Christian, that "he is open to the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years."[68] Bushnell is correct, says Nevin in opposing a concept of religion which turns humanity into a sandheap of individuals and ignores the organic tie between the child and his parents. Virtue is never the product of separate and independent choice; rather the christian life develops in the context of the group. Bushnell has rendered admirable service in asserting the organic, historical nature of life and religion as the proper foundation for the life of educational religion as against "the popular Methodistical and Puritan way of looking at the subject."[69]

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[66] Ibid., p. 265. [67] Nevin, "The Anglican Crisis," p. 370.

However, Nevin continues, Bushnell has made the mistake of laying his theory of educational religion on "the constitution of nature, in the case of men, rather than upon the constitution of grace, as a strictly supernatural system."[70] The organic relationship is one of nature simply, rather than one of grace also. This becomes clear when he asserts the doctrine of the original depravity of the individual but proceeds to rob it of its force by making it sort of necessary accident merely to our moral probation, or some sort of inclination to evil which actually may be turned to good account. He assumes that despite man's depravity the constitution of the world is such that if only the conditions of a strictly pious education are present the depravity will be surmounted and life will right itself from the start and flow forward into channels of holiness instead of sin. This assumes, says Nevin, that the capabilities of our human nature as such warrant the expectation of christian development. This assumption ignores the truth that back of all development lies the fact of depravity which is native to man and must be dealt with before there can be any growth in spirituality. Man is neither by constitution nor heredity fitted for growth in holiness.

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[68] Quoted in J. W. Nevin, "Educational Religion," Weekly Messenger (June 23, 1847), p. 2450.

[69] Ibid., July 7, 1847, p. 2458. [70] Ibid.

Nevin holds that this general defect in Bushnell's theory can be seen in the view he takes of infant baptism. Bushnell is correct when he observes that infant baptism can be justified only if the religious education and development of the child be assumed. But Bushnell makes the mistake of holding infant baptism to be of force only by virtue of an organic connection between parent and child. Baptism, according to Bushnell, is "a seal of faith in the parents, applied over to the child, on the ground of a presumption that his faith is wrapped up in the parent's faith, so that he is accounted a believer from the beginning."[71] One must assume that a child will grow up a believer or he will not. The Baptist, Bushnell says, assumes that he will not, and so declares baptism inappropriate for an infant. God assumes he will, and since the child is too young to assume the rite for himself, the parent is allowed the confidence that his faith and character will be reproduced in the child and the propriety of the rite as a seal of faith will not be violated. This is all good, says Nevin, as a protest against the Baptists and the modern Puritan system, but it is a false theory in that it assumes that the fact on which the validity of infant baptism rests is already at hand, whether the child is baptized or not, in the character of the parent, the natural matrix in which the character of the child is formed. It places the whole transaction within the sphere of nature and utterly ignores the sphere of grace. Indeed, it rejects the whole idea of supernatural grace. A true sacramental theory assumes that "the salvation of Christ is for infants and children as well as adults, and that the law of organic comprehension by which they are included in the life of their parents is made to extend also with full force to the sphere of grace."[72] But it assumes also that the constitution of nature is entirely insufficient to salvation, that this requires resources of a strictly supernatural kind. Such resources, Nevin maintained, are present only in the Church. The Church has a right to look upon her infant children as comprehended organically in the privileges of the Christian covenant, notwithstanding their natural depravity, and parents are bound to bring them up in the Lord. But on what ground? Certainly not on the ground of natural birth, for by natural birth we are all children of wrath.

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[71] _Ibid_., July 14, 1847, p. 2461.

> Descent from godly parents cannot change this law. Our birth relation to pious parents may give us a right to be taken into the Church; but it can never of itself make us to be in the Church as our born privilege, authorizing our parents to bring us up as christians from the womb. The basis for such treatment must come to us in some different form. It

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[72] Ibid.

> must come to us out of the bosom of the Church herself! She makes us Christians, in this sense, by the sacrament of holy Baptism, which she has always held to be of supernatural force for this very purpose; and on the ground of an actual relationship to the new life of the gospel thus constituted in a real objective way she says to each christian parent, Take this child and nurse it, and educate it for me, and for the Lord. It is not possible to vindicate the idea of educational religion on any other than this old church scheme. Faith must have a basis, in the case, beyond itself, on which to rest. Mere nature forms no such basis; the birth of nature leads only to despair. The basis then must be supernatural; and yet, in this character, objective and real. We have it, not in the world, but in the Church.[73]

Baptism thus ushers the infant into a new relationship, a saving relationship which makes it possible for the child to surmount original depravity and to grow up into the form of a truly Christian life under the powers and resources in the Church. If one ignores this fact, as Bushnell does--thus siding with the basic premise of the very view he is opposing in his own church--one is faced with a dilemma. He must renounce all faith in the whole idea of educational religion and thus fall over into the fanaticism of Methodism and the sects; or he resolves Christianity into "the mere constitution of our common nature and so make it a thing of birth and blood descent," which is to fall over into Rationalism. Bushnell, for all his good intention, is impaled on the horn of this dilemma.

Nevin's assertion that baptism ushers the infant into a saving relationship with the Church answers partially the question of the efficacy of baptism in the case of infants. It does not answer the question of the specific power of infant baptism. If the grace objectively present in the sacrament for the washing of regeneration is present only to faith, as Nevin has affirmed, how can it be efficacious in the case of the infant who cannot exercise faith? Nevin's answer appears to be that baptism, in the case of an infant, is the beginning of a process which comes to consummation in confirmation with the personal response of faith. Without confirmation baptism is incomplete.

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[73] Ibid.

The fact that the sacraments, the Lord's Supper in particular, convey the power of Christ's glorified life with all its benefits over into the life of the believer raises the question of the character of the ministry. Does ordination convey grace which fits the minister for the administering of the ordinances of the church? While Nevin does not enter into any extensive discussion of the question in the period in which we are interested he does state that ordination sets the minister apart, in an extraordinary manner, for the discharge of his duties. In discussing the life-bearing, objective, supernatural character of the church and its ordinances and institutions, Nevin says,

> The ministry, for instance, is far more than any merely human institution could ever be possibly under this form. The office is a necessary organ of the body of Christ, and as such it is the bearer of a divine supernatural power. . . . Ordination does convey, in this sense, objective virtue or force, such as no man, in the ordinary course of things, can be allowed to possess without it. So all ministerial functions are as such of more force, than any common human transactions bearing a similar form. . . The Church has power to bind and loose upon earth. The regular functions of the ministry are divine functions. Church censures and church absolutions too, take hold upon the invisible world. Church services involve the force of a true liturgical sacrifice, which serves of itself to bring men near to God.[74]

To deny this is to reduce the status of the minister to the level of any other public servant, and to reduce the significance of the service of worship to the level of a fourth of July celebration.

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[74] Nevin, "The Church," p. 25.

> If there be no supernatural force in the ministry and sacraments for their own ends, it is plain that the entire objective character of the Church, and with this its true historical character, and at last its character as a real divine constitution, the "Body of Christ" in the world, must virtually fall to the ground at the same time.[75]

The question of the character of the ministry, as Nevin conceived it, within the context of the Church, as he defined it, is illuminated by Nevin's reaction to the problem of episcopacy as it was being discussed in the Anglican Church. The Anglicans, he noted, have claimed the prerogatives of the Church as against other Protestant groups, because they hold the episcopacy to be of divine appointment and their bishops to be in apostolic succession. Nevin maintains that the question of the validity and prerogatives of episcopacy poses a deeper question than that of appointment or succession. It goes to the very heart of the question, What is the Church? Actually, he charges, Anglicans hold to episcopacy as a matter of following the letter of the law, rather than viewing the office as rising from the ground of the Church as it stems from the mystery of the Incarnation. For Anglicans who take the Low Church ground the episcopal office has not more significance than baptism has for the Baptists who observe the rite because Scripture commands it. As between Low and High Church Anglicans the position taken is one distinguished only by the degree of stress which is laid on the office. A true High Church theory, says Nevin, requires something more than episcopacy based on outward precept as the rock on which the church rests. Anglicanism which rests on this foundation is no more than "Evangelical Puritanism under the drapery of Episcopal forms." In view of this ". . . it would be far more manly, we think, if the school here noticed, both in England and this country, would at once forsake Anglicanism, as it now stands, and either pass over into the bosom of other denominations, or, if more to their taste, form a new Episcopal sect in open and free fellowship . . . with other sections of orthodox Protestantism."[76]

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[75] Ibid.

The question now shaking Anglicanism is, therefore, far deeper than the prerogatives of episcopacy as of divine appointment. The far deeper question is that of the nature of the Church, a question which must be settled before the significance either of the sacraments or the episcopacy can be ascertained. Nevin feels that the Tractarian movement was forcing the Anglican Church to face this question.

> It is causing the earnest mind, both in that communion and out of it, to see and feel, that either the church rights and prerogatives of which it makes a parade are nothing and form no special property whatever in its case, or that they must have a far deeper and more solid ground on which to rest than the order of bishops or the use of the liturgy, as a simply outward appointment. No *juro divino* constitution, in any such style as this, can uphold in a real way for faith the mystery of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.[77]

The old catholic church, says Nevin, as it was enunciated by Cyprian, began with the Church as a real constitution carrying in itself by divine appointment actual supernatural and heavenly powers. Within this framework the episcopate carried forward the powers of the Church, was the foundation of the unity and strength of the Church. Episcopacy got its importance from the attributes and powers of the Church, a fact which modern Protestant Episcopacy either rejects altogether or turns into affectation and sham. Anglicanism is not Cyprianic Christianity as it would like to suppose. Episcopacy is a question of secondary importance to that of the Church. Therefore, the question of the Church must be settled before the question of sacraments or ministry can be resolved.

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[76] Nevin, "Anglican Crisis," p. 374. [77] *Ibid.*, p. 377.

Thus in the period in which we are interested Nevin appears to be saying that the ministry as an organ of the church derives its character from the attributes and powers of the Church. He says nothing more about ordination than the fact that it conveys a force or virtue which makes the ministry to be something more than any other merely human office. It is not an office which can be selected and invested with the powers and prerogatives. The Church is more than a human institution; it is a supernatural reality, therefore its ministry is more than an ordinary office. This is in contrast to the Tractarians who made much of clerical authority based on ordination in the apostolic succession. For Nevin it is the Church which makes the ministry rather than the ministry in historic connection with the apostles which makes the Church or guarantees the validity of its ordinances.

In his articles on pseudo-Protestantism in 1845 Nevin protested the action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church which declared Roman baptism invalid. This action amounts

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to saying that if a Roman Catholic country were to be converted to Protestantism, it could not be admitted to the family of Protestant churches without ". . . submitting to be rebaptised and to have its whole ministry reconsecrated by Protestant hands . . ." in the same way a Mohammedan country would be treated if converted.[78] Here he assumes the validity of both Roman baptism and ordination. To do otherwise, he holds, is to deny all true church character to Romanism. The implication appears to be that the ministry gets its powers from the character of the church. Since he consistently maintained the true church character of Romanism, he naturally would maintain the validity of its ministry.

What one must infer from Nevin's scattered and inconclusive references to ordination is stated in fairly clear terms in some remarks on a meeting of the Classis of Mercersburg which appeared in the Mercersburg Review for July 1849. The Classis had been called upon to decide the validity of the ordination of a minister of the Albright connection who had applied for admission as a candidate for ordination in the German Reformed Church. Nevin says that by granting the petition for new ordination, the Classis decided against the right of the Albright body to be recognized as a part of the true Christian Church. No question was raised in regard to the baptism of the applicant who had been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church.

Nevin declared that no other decision could have been reached unless the Classis had chosen to give up all faith in the divine constitution of the Church. If the Church be of any force at all as an object of faith and trust, and if schism is still to be regarded as possible, it is plain that any such self-constituted body as the Albright Brethren have no right or title to be recognized as part of the true church. It is worse than idle to pretend any faith in the church as a divine historical institution, and then to say that Jacob Albright or any "pious Tom, Dick and Harry" has a right to make himself the source of a new ministry provided only that he can find a few disciples to submit to his authority and to lay their hands upon him afterward in confirmation of his commission.

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[78] Nevin, "Pseudo-Protestantism," August 13, 1845, p. 2061.

If it be asked then, said Nevin, how we are to justify the Reformation and vindicate the validity of the Protestant ministry, the answer is short. The validity of the ministry depends not upon any outward succession, nakedly and separately considered, nor upon any theory either which denies the necessity of a true historical succession in the life of the church and makes it possible for any body of Christians under any circumstances to start a new church.

> It is the life of the Church as such, the life of the Church as an organic whole, which alone can fully legitimate and clothe with power the needful organs of this life, and their necessary functions. . . . After all, it is the Church, the presence of Christ's life in his Body, which supports the true line of the ministry, and not the line of the ministry that upholds mechanically the being and authority of the Church.[79]

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[79] J. W. Nevin, "The Classis of Mercersburg," Mercersburg Review, I (July, 1849), 385.

On this principle one may justify the Reformation, even though one must admit some disturbance in the ordinary law of ministerial succession at the time. The Reformation lay in the life of the Church as a whole; it was the product of the old Catholic Church life itself. The central consciousness of the Christian world had been struggling toward it for centuries, and it was the organic outburst of the life of the Church as a whole which laid hold of the Reformers and brought the movement to consummation by using them as its organs. The Albright movement was called forth by no such deep, general force which came to its uncontrollable and necessary outbreak in his person. His sect is no birth of the Church but a schismatic denial of its objective, historical authority. How then could its ordination be valid? Priestly power starts in Christ, and passes from him to the body of the Church, to be exercised from its life as a whole, and not to be snatched away by profane hands for the use of any and every sect which may take it in its head to set up a separate priesthood in its own name.

Nevin did not go so far as to unchurch New England Congregationalism on this question, but he was sharply critical of its democratic theory of church government and orders. Theoretically and practically Puritanism treats the church as a simply human institution and of divine force only in the sense that the voice of the people is the voice of God. The powers of the organization and the offices by which they are executed come not from above but from below. Since the people are the fountain of right and the basis of order, no superhuman force is allowed to the ministry and its functions. Congregationalism makes it the glory of Christianity to be purely and intensely democratic. Hence it ". . . makes the ministers of religion to be much like county or town officers, or sees in them at best only good religious counsellors and teachers, whom the people create for their own use, and follow as far as to themselves may seem good."[80] Hence, it allows no ministry drawing its rights and powers from a divinely constituted church. And as one looks at the Church immediately after the apostolic age, he discovers that neither Congregationalism nor Presbyterianism bears even a remote resemblance to its order of the ministry. The primary question is not whether there were two or three orders of clergy, or whether the overseership of the Church was diocesan or parochial. The real question involved the constitution of a church as divine and the rights and powers of the ministry as drawn from this constitution.

While Nevin argues at length for sound doctrine as regards the sacraments, Christ and the Church, and while he stands for the binding power of church absolutions and answers, and for the force of ordination within the context of true church life, Nevin never mentions the sacramental character of preaching. On this point he appears to have a blind spot so far as the emphasis of Luther and Calvin on the fact that the preaching of the Word conveys the same grace as the sacraments.

Berg's reaction to Nevin's characterization of the ministry and ordinances of the Church was that these constituted proof of what he called Nevin's Romanizing tendency. It becomes a question, said Nevin in reply, as to whether one considers the organs of the church to belong to the sphere of nature or to the sphere of grace. "Does ordination convey no divine powers? Has the Church no power to bind or loose on earth? Are church absolutions and censures no better than the corresponding judgments of a temperance society? Are the holy sacraments as void of grace as the toasts of a fourth of July celebration?"[81] Since the Roman Church holds that the Church is the bearer of supernatural powers, it is easy to brand a positive answer to these questions as Romanizing. If the question is one of tendency, Berg's denial that ordination and absolution and the sacraments convey grace shows a tendency toward Socinianism, Rationalism and Unitarianism. The true faith of the Reformation lies between Rome and Racow. If one is to tend toward Rome or infidelity he ought to be clear as to the nature of his choice.

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[80] J. W. Nevin, "The Church Supernatural," Weekly Messenger, August 14, 1847, p. 2474.

Nevin's intent in his discussion of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper appears to have been twofold. First, and perhaps foremost, he was concerned to uncover the Reformed doctrine of the sixteenth century, to show that this sacrament was central to the church life of the time, and thus to call to account the prevailing unsacramental religion of Protestant orthodoxy. Second, he was concerned to place the doctrine in scientific form in the light of prevailing psychological and philosophical insights and then to remove some of the ambiguities of the original doctrine which had been partially responsible for the fact that it had been abandoned. Both tasks were necessary to rescue the doctrine from the rationalistic form into which it had fallen under the influence of seventeenth and eighteenth century modes of thought. In this way he hoped to make Protestantism face up to the positive spirit which pervaded its symbols at the beginning, and to place it once more in continuity with life of the old Catholic faith.

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[81] *Ibid*.

In so doing he accused the churches of the Reformed and Lutheran tradition of having virtually abandoned their original life, and he completely unchurched the Sect groups. Both were guilty of having fallen over into Rationalism.

Having made the sacraments of the Lord's Supper central to sound church life and worship, as epitomizing the central fact of the Christian faith, he also held it necessary to hold a theory of the Christology and the Church which was in harmony with this fact. Hence his doctrine of the Church as the continuation of Christ's life in history, his doctrine of baptism as an insertion into this sphere of grace, and his concept of the sacred character of the ministry as the organ of the church with divine functions and powers.

His reading of Calvin and the Reformed symbols following lead him to the conviction that the sacraments were central to the Calvinism which entered into the Reformed tradition, in contrast to his most articulate critic Hodge who maintained that the doctrine of the decrees was central to the Reformed tradition and that its sacramental doctrine was that of Zuingli, the only theory compatible with the doctrine of the decrees. To admit that the Reformed doctrine was Zuinglian was impossible for Nevin. If the sacramental theory, so necessary to sound church life, runs into Zuinglianism one might as well despair of recovering the positive church life of the Reformation, since no church can stand which is constitutionally unsacramental. On this ground there is no way to legitimately defend Protestantism as a real continuation of the old Catholic faith.

CHAPTER VI

THE DILEMMA OF PROTESTANTISM

From the earliest statement by Nevin of the Mercersburg doctrine of the sacraments, of Christ and the Church running as far back as the early 1840's Nevin's critics inside the German Reformed Church and outside of the church had insisted that his theology had a Romanizing tendency. And, as we have suggested, there were those both inside and outside of his church who felt that on the basis of his writings during the period 1850-1852 he was pursuing a course which would inevitably lead him into the Roman Church. It is clear at least that while he was pointing up the shortcomings of the protestant churches he went to great lengths to justify the position of Romanism on the question of the Church particularly as the proper and legitimate development of Christianity from the earliest post-apostolic days to the time of the Reformation. When one places this polemic alongside his critical attack on reigning American protestantism as mere negative Romanism one sees some justification for the fears of his friends and the opinions of his critics that he was headed in the direction of Rome. The question naturally arises then as to whether he had given up all hope of protestantism and saw no alternative for himself but to fall back into the Roman Church.

We need, therefore, to take a more thorough look at his estimate of the ills attending the Protestant Church, at the questions in issue between Protestantism and Romanism, and the live alternatives which he saw on the question of the Church.

Nevin's attempt to help the German Reformed Church to define its own distinctive spirit and theology had led him back to the Reformation. His study of the theology of that period as it came to mature expression on the Reformed side in the thought of Calvin and the Reformed Confessions led him to the conclusion that the German Reformed Church in particular and the Protestant churches in general had fallen away from the distinctive spirit of the Reformation. Further study proved to show that they had similarly departed from the faith of the early church and its subsequent development in Roman Catholicism. Indeed, Nevin felt that American Protestantism had lost any positive life which would enable it to stand on its own feet, and had emerged as "pseudo-Protestantism" or mere negative Romanism. The Protestant Church, eschewing church tradition, Romanism, and its own distinctive genius in the Reformation, had cut itself adrift from history to claim that it was a return to the simplicity of the early church. It had launched its ship from the port of the Bible interpreted by private judgmant as its only standard of belief and church polity. It had abandoned the Church as a supernatural historical life-bearing institution and its theology as rooted in the Apostles' Creed. Nevin was convinced that Protestantism could not defend itself as a legitimate movement while thus sundered from its past, and that further its contention that it was a return to the simplicity of the early church was wholly untenable. So long as Protestantism lay becalmed in the doldrum of negativism it could never expect to fulfil its God-ordained function as a corrective of the one-sided development of Romanism and purge itself of its own errors. Nevin had first spelled out this indictment of contemporary American Protestantism in 1845 in his series "Pseudo-Protestantism." The crisis of Protestantism, he said there, revolves around the question of whether the positive life of the Reformation shall be maintained or whether it shall give way to the merely negative and destructional tendency in which Protestantism is currently bogged down. Eventually he saw the crisis as involving at heart the question of whether or not protestantism could recapture the substance of the concept of the Church as it emerged immediately following the age of the Apostles and developed steadily in the life of the Roman Church and from thence into the best of the church life of the Reformation in Lutheranism and Calvinism.

Nevin felt that American Protestantism must take seriously the resurgence of Romanism, and the question of the Church as it was now engaging the attention of the best minds in the Church of England and in the best of German theologians, at least seriously enough to ask itself what the meaning of its protest against Rome involved. American Protestantism must rethink its fundamental concepts. So far as he was concerned Protestantism, to become a positive force, must see itself, as did the Reformation, as no radical break with the Roman Church, as it emerged steadily and surely from the dominant tendencies of the early church, but as a continuation of the life of this church in a higher and better form. Most certainly this would require a return to the concept of Christianity and its objective, life-bearing character as it was defined in the Apostles' Creed.

Protestantism in America contained two movements or types of religious groups which Nevin declared embodied the pseudo-Protestant Spirit in relation to the old Catholic faith, namely, the Sect System, and what he called New England Puritanism.

Nevin's most closely reasoned polemic against Sectarianism was Antichrist published in 1848. Nevin holds that from the very beginning Christianity has been assailed by two forms of opposition. It has had to struggle with broad and open infidelity from without, and by the same spirit of error from within. Holding as he did that Christianity is not simply a divine doctrine, a system of truth made known by extraordinary revelation, nor yet a divine law or system of ethics which brings men to a clearer apprehension of the moral relation in which they stand to one another and to God, but rather a Fact, supernatural and historic, stemming from the Incarnation, Nevin concludes that any view which denies this Fact is the spirit of antichrist with which the Church has had to struggle.

The struggle began with infidelity in the form of Ebionism, a Jewish heresy, and Gnosticism, a Gentile heresy, both distinguished for the fact that they refused to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Since each in its own way denies an actual incarnation, the term antichrist as descriptive of this infidelity by the writer of I John designates not a person but a spirit. This spirit early invaded the church to become the spirit of schism as well as heresy. Thus the power of this spirit is not necessarily confined to open opposition to the truth of Christianity but is also associated with forms of Christian character that are prevailingly sound and good. Its presence in the church is not that of an openly enunciated false system as opposed to the truth. Its character is rather inward and insidious, entering into the very process of the Christian life itself which is carried forward as a historical process only by way of constant struggle with those who are the subjects of its power. Thus the antichristian spirit continuously appears in more and more refined and subtle form in close conjunction with true Christian life.

The spirit of antichrist is schismatic because it is grounded in a theology which by its very nature is less catholic, less comprehensive than the Christological fact which breaks down all walls of partition in the sphere of religion. To deny that Christ is come in the flesh is to substitute the Jewish or Gentile consciousness for the far deeper consciousness that should swallow up both in the form of Christianity. This, of course, overthrows the entire idea of one holy Catholic Church.

> In its own necessary constitution then, the anti-christian spirit is more or less sectarian and schismatic. It involves a rent or rupture, with the Christian life, in its last ground. . . . Antichrist is thus the spirit at once both of heresy and schism.[1]

Nevin traces at length the progress of the spirit of antichrist from its appearance as open infidelity outside the church through its manifestation within the church in the errors of Docetism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Pelagianism, the christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, the Pelagianism of the Roman Church of the Middle Ages and the heretical sects from the Paulicians on, to its present manifestation in Rationalism and Sectarianism.

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[1] J. W. Nevin, "Antichrist," (New York: John S. Taylor, 1848), p. 34.

The attempt thus to link this ancient spirit to the present state of Christianity proceeds on the assumption that Christianity is historical, that is, it is the working of an organic process by which the thinking and working of the Church in the present age is to be regarded as the growth continually of its life through all ages. Heresy and schism is then a process, developing itself through various phases simply because the life of the church is never stationary. And the process will go on until the Church becomes complete at last in the splendor of Christ's second coming. It is not to be assumed then that the Reformation should bring to an end the activity of this false spirit. On the contrary, if Protestantism is itself an advance on the Christian life immediately preceding it, the anti-christian heresy could be expected to show itself more active than it had previously been.

> It is no compliment to Protestantism to say that there is no antichrist save that which has been left behind in the Church of Rome; for this must imply as the world now stands, that Protestant Christianity is comparatively impotent, as a true revelation of the presence and glory of Christ. Where the life of Christ is mainly active, in the way of historical force, we have reason to expect a corresponding activity of antichrist, as the spirit of delusion and error. If then Protestantism be the truth of Christ in a higher form than Romanism, we ought not to be surprised certainly to find this

> false spirit here also under its most subtle and dangerous character. In the nature of the case, moreover, the Protestant Antichrist must be sought, not beyond the pale of Protestantism and in the posture of open opposition to its cause; but in the bosom of this cause itself, regarded as the most perfect style of the Church.[2]

Such a revelation we have in the Rationalism and Sectarianism so widely characteristic of modern Protestant Christianity. Rationalism being theoretic in tendency falls in with the Ebionitic tendency and sees nothing more than a common human life in Christ's person while at the same time it pays lip service to the divine in his life. The two forms of existence thus held apart remain two different spheres of consciousness, and rationalistic supernaturalism subverts the divinity of Christ as much as if it were consistently to deny it. The spirit of Sect, on the other hand, has a natural affinity for Gnosticism. More practical than theoretic at the start it is disposed to lay stress on the spiritual side of Christianity as the revelation of a higher life in the world but does not allow it to come to a full human revelation in the person of Christ. In this way it is carried over by inward necessity into the sphere of theoretic Rationalism. Both are incompatible with sound Christian orthodoxy, and are at war with the whole fact of the incarnation. Together and separately they are the Antichrist of the Church of our time.

With special reference to the Sects Nevin says the marks of antichrist are manifest in diverse ways. This spirit thrusts aside any idea of a real mediation between man and God. It retains the old dualism of nature and spirit, heaven and earth, God and man. Hence it undervalues the mystery of Christ's person, making him to be simply the occasion and cause of the atonement in God's mind rather than the very fact in which it consists. Everything hinges on what Christ speaks and does rather than on what he is. With this false sense of what is properly comprehended in Christ's person, the Sect has no faith in the church as a "real supernatural constitution" always present in the world. It concedes that Christ did come once in the flesh, an event in the dim past, but it denies him any real existence now in the Church. It turns his presence in the Church into "the character of a mere ghostlike abstraction" and defines the church simply as "the form only in which a certain system of thought, feeling and action produced by the gospel, is accustomed to make itself known, in conformity with our general social nature."[3]

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[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

From this lack of faith in the Church the Sect undervalues the ministry, and makes little account of outward ordination on the principle that the spirit qualifies ministers for their sacred office. The ministry is allowed no real union with "the man" on whom its sanctity and powers rest. Similarly, the Sect denies any objective efficacy in Baptism or the Lord's Supper. The more orthodox sink them to the level of mere signs, the less orthodox set them aside altogether or else change their character into an entirely new sense. The Sect has no feeling for "the objective and liturgical in worship," and sinks worship into an extreme subjectivity, a dull routine of empty ceremony.

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[3] Ibid., p. 52.

Since the Sect has no faith in the Church as an organic process by which Christ's life reaches forward through all ages, it follows that the Sect is the foe of all history, of Church authority, of Church tradition, and is disposed to stand on the right of private judgment and individual freedom. The notion of individual freedom is a special mark or feature of antichrist. It starts not in faith in an objective reality, within the context of which reason can only be truly free, but with reason itself. The general and objective is lost in what is particular and subjective. Its maxim is not "I believe in order to understand" but "I understand in order to believe." By a show of subjection to the authority of the Bible, it pretends to obey God rather than mere human authority. The sectarian has faith in the Bible, according to his own sense of it, but not in the church; he has faith in the written record of the Revelation but not in the fact of the revelation. He tramples underfoot old creeds and confessions. He makes his own mind rather than the mind of the church the norm of the meaning of the revelation. "The Bible and the Holy Spirit against the whole church" is his cry; "my sense of the Bible against the whole sense of the world besides!"

> In riding the Bible with such pedantic parade, each sect rides in fact only its own theological hobby, in the Bible's name; while the individual ME is arrogantly exalted (antichrist) above all that is divine either in the Church or Bible, as though it were the source of Christianity itself, and Christ could have no being objectively in the world, save by its sovereign permission.[4]

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

The effect of all this is a hyperspiritualism, a zeal for spiritual religion in opposition to a religion of forms which often rises to heights of inspiration, though more often to heights of ranting frenzy. It eventually cools down into the form of a "frigid, rationalistic abstraction."

The end result of all this is fanaticism and endless division. Being bound by no authority except that of its own mind, Sectarianism is subject to irregular, spasmodic impulse, alternating between extremes. Cut off from the universal and Catholic, from the sense of the enduring in the Church, it makes the Church to be simply what men choose to make it. So any man has a right to secede from the Church as he finds it and form one to suit his own taste.

> The principle in this way becomes one of unlimited division; if it be proper to have fifty sects, we may easily allow five hundred red or five thousand; it follows, at last, that any congregation or fragment of a congregation is competent at any time to erect a separate standard in the name of the Church, and carry away with it all the powers that this divine constitution may be supposed to comprehend.[5]

The Sects commonly allow that the Church is more comprehensive than a particular communion, thus acknowledging itself to be something less than the whole. But Sects acknowledge and exclude each other at the same time, so that they never come to any sense of the Church as a real whole.

The whole system is heretical as well as schismatic. Sect theology is a system of barren mechanical abstractions, at one with the grossly subjective, neological theology of Deism. It begins a high spiritualism which sooner or later falls to the level of fleshly rationalism.

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[5] *Ibid*., p. 64.

He continued his polemic against the Sect System in the fall of 1849 in a review of the book published by John Winebrenner, History of all the Religious Denominations in the United States. The work allowed each of fifty-three Protestant groups in America to represent its own history and distinctive position. Nevin said he at first refused to have the book in his library, but had changed his mind since it revealed so starkly the "moral Babel" so characteristic of the Sect System. The work illustrates, for example, problems which arise out of the Sectarian stand with regard to the sole authority of the Bible as the only textbook and guide of Christianity. One reason advanced by the sects for their rule of "no creed but the Bible" is that it enables one to get clear of human dogmas and opinions so as to come the more certainly to one faith and one baptism. Thus, says Nevin, they admit the obligation of church unity. But when the Sects combine the idea of the authority of scripture with the idea of private judgment one gets not unity but the introduction of as many more sects "as religious ingenuity or stupidity may have power to invent."[6] Each sect is loud in its stand for freedom and private judgment but at the same time wants to make its own system of opinions and practices normative for its members and for all other sects. Each sect is

> . . . in its way and measures, a papacy, a would be ecclesiastical domination, which seeks as far as possible to nullify and kill independent thought and all free life.[7]

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[6] J. W. Nevin, "The Sect System," Mercersburg Review, I (September, 1849), 494.

[7] Ibid., p. 498.

The Sects by exalting the right of private judgment and the sole authority of the Bible affect an independence of the authority of all previous history and trace their origin to the New Testament, everything intervening being an apostacy. This shows their unhistorical character which grows out of a lack of faith in the Church which is declared by the Apostles' Creed to be an object of faith, a divine, supernatural, objective power in the world which men have no ability to make or unmake. For the Sects the Creed is a dead letter; the sacraments are mere signs shorn of all real power or objective mystical force; the Bible is reduced to "an outward Jewish rule," a book of things to be believed and done rather than a revelation of the "new constitution of grace and truth starting in Christ's person and perpetuating itself in this form, as a most real historical fact, the Church."[8]

Starting as it does in private judgment, caprice and in the most outward and accidental occasions, and devoted to some one-sided Christian interest, the sectarian church becomes narrow, unfriendly, bigoted and exclusive thus violating the catholicity and unity of the ideal church. No multiplication of sects can cure this deficiency since one can proliferate moot points of Christianity ad infinitum. The Sects generally hold to the doctrine of justification by faith, but when this is separated from the true doctrine of the Church it runs on the one hand into the false extreme of fanaticism, violent conversion, for example, or a dead antinomianism.

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[8] Ibid., p. 507.

An encouraging characteristic of the Sect System lies in the fact that it lends testimony throughout against itself to the "idea of the Holy Catholic Church."

> Every sect, in spite of itself, is forced to acknowledge, at least indirectly, the necessary attributes of the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolical. It cannot be a mere particular corporation, society or persuasion however much in some views it may seem to be disposed to be nothing more. To stand at all, it must put on the character of a church, and then carry out as it best can what this is felt by a sort of inward necessity, to imply and require. It must be one and universal, the whole, that of necessity excludes all beyond its own sphere. In this way every sect, so far as it can be called a church at all, becomes a caricature, of the catholicity with which it pretends to make war, and so, like every other caricature, bears witness to the truth, which is thus distorted by it and brought into contempt.[9]

Here the sect system involves itself in endless inconsistency and contradiction. It sets itself above the Church, but modestly calls itself a church. It hates church tradition and will hear of no binding force in church history, but it conjures up a chain of authority in the same form out of "the little yesterday of its own life" and binds it on the neck of its subjects. It will have no saints or fathers, but offers instead its own fathers and makes it blasphemy to speak a word against them. It is great for an open Bible and private judgment but channels both into its own narrow, single track. The very things it protests against and fights in the Church of Rome it is ready in the next moment to assert for itself with the exception that the old catholic truth which underlies the Roman abuse is treated as part of that abuse itself.

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[9] *Ibid*., pp. 529-30.

The Sect System thus subverts the whole idea of the Church. It is a source of endless disintegration of the Church. One cannot identify any one Sect with the Church, since one must recognize the legitimacy of any Sect, thus tacitly recognizing that each is a onesided and defective manifestation of the Christian life. The most that one can hopefully say for the Sect System is that it is "interimistic" and as related to the sense of the true Church is destined to pass away.

During 1848-1850 Nevin appears to have been preoccupied with criticism of the Sect System. In July 1850 he noted with qualified approbation the publication of two works on the church question in America, namely, T. H. Stockton's The Bible Alliance: or the Pen, the Pulpit and the Press and Austin Craig's "The Unity and Faith of the Christian Church." Both works took the ground that the existing Sect System in the church was anti-Christian, that the only proper remedy was the abandonment of denominational Christianity and all sectarian distinctions on the part of the true followers of Christ and a free reconstruction of Christian life on the broad and open platform of the Bible. Nevin lauded these works as representative of a "tendency deeply embedded in the spirit of the age," for example, the Oxford Movement, which deserves the attention of all who would rightly estimate or understand "the true import of the Church Question."[10] He allowed a certain measure of reason and right to this "Undenominational Christianity" as against the Sect

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[10] J. W. Nevin, "Bible Christianity," Mercersburg Review, II (July, 1850), 354.

System, but he wondered how it could oppose the Sect System by giving up all doctrines and creeds and championing Bible Christianity alone, and at the same time condemn the Sects for whom the Bible is the only rule of faith and practice. A purely Biblical Christianity, said Nevin, can never be a complete Christianity. This must rest on

> . . . the objective being of the Church, and so in this view the authority which belongs to the living historical revelation of Christianity in the world along with the outward letter and word of it contained in the Bible.[11]

Nevin gave considerable attention to disproving two theses of the champions of what he termed "Negative Protestantism," namely, that the Protestant Church was a return to or repristination of primitive Christianity and that it had its foundation in a purely Biblical Christianity. During 1851 and 1852 he wrote two series of articles on this theme, the first titled "Early Christianity," the second "Cyprian."

Nevin's chief foil during the period 1850-1852 was what he called New England Puritanism and the doctrine of Christianity and the Church which it proposed. By Puritanism Nevin seems to have meant the Protestantism of the theologically most significant Protestant groups, notably, New England Congregationalists and Presbyterians. In "Early Christianity" Nevin characterizes the Puritan doctrines as holding that:

Early Christianity was both in doctrine and practice what is now (1851) known as Evangelical Protestantism without prelacy. Orthodox doctrine embraced the doctrines of the Trinity, human depravity and the atonement. This system was based on the Bible and private judgment. There was no papacy, no priesthood, no liturgy, no thought of supernatural virtue in baptism or anything like the mystery of the real presence in the sacrament of the altar. The early church ". . . ran in the channel rather of popular freedom, democratic right, and common sense . . ."[12] This state of affairs was of short duration, for by the third century the Church as found in full force in the days of Cyprian, was involved in a change which ran counter to the original sense of Christianity and involved the apostasy which afterward became complete in the Church of Rome. For a thousand years or more true Christianity was kept alive here and there by small dissenting groups. The long night of darkness came to an end with the Reformation, but the sixteenth century Reformers never got completely away from Romanism. It took Puritanism to complete the Reformation, and Puritanism itself required some time to come to the perfection of Bible simplicity and truth which it now happily represents, especially in New England.

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[11] Ibid., p. 367.

This theory, Nevin maintains, does violence both to Christ's promise that his Church should stand and to the facts of history which lend it no support. His own study of the church from the end of the era of the apostles through Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian led him to conclude that there had been a steady development of the tendencies which emerged in the theory of the Church as it was held by the Roman Church--including its doctrine of the ministry and the sacraments.

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[12] J. W. Nevin, "Early Christianity," Mercersburg Review, III (November, 1851), 514.

Nevin characterizes this concept of Christianity as it was embodied in the doctrine of the Church which then emerged as follows:

1. It held Christianity to be a supernatural system, propounded by the Savior to his Apostles and handed down from them as a living tradition. This tradition included the Bible which was the rule of faith only as it came "from the Apostles in a living way by the Church."[13]

2. It held the Apostles' Creed to be the order of doctrine.

3. It looked upon the sacraments as mysteries, taking baptism to be for the remission of sins, and seeing in the Eucharist the real presence of the Redeemer's glorified body.

4. It acknowledged the divine character of the Christian priesthood, the necessity of confession, the grace of ministerial absolution.

5. It believed in purgatory and the efficacy of prayer in releasing the dead from their sins.

6. It made intercession to the saints for both the living and the dead.

7. It cherished and venerated the relics and monuments of departed saints and martyrs in the belief that miracles were often performed through the instrumentality of such relics.

8. It set a high value on the merits of celibacy and voluntary poverty and both by doctrine and example recommended the monastic life as suited to promote the spiritual welfare of men.

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[13] Ibid., p. 551.

Puritanism eschews this whole scheme, says Nevin, as a monstrous perversion of the fair image of original Christianity. It denudes the Church of its character as an objective, supernatural institution, flowing from the mystery of the Incarnation and containing the power to present what it represents through its ministry and sacraments.

> Theoretically and practically, Puritanism treats the actual church as a simply human institution, the work of man's hands, and of such divine force at the last only as civil government is of such force, or in the sense rather of the republican maxim, "the voice of the people is the voice of God." The powers of the organization, and so of course the offices by which they are to be executed are held to come, not from above, but from below. . . . It is made the glory of Christianity to be purely and intensely democratic . . .[14]

Puritanism denies the catholicity of the Church as one organic body, embracing all professing Christians as one whole, as intrinsically impossible and absurd. Puritanism stands for the principle of independency. It holds that Christ organized no church but left this to the apostles. The churches they organized were original, independent of each other and complete. Remove the untenable notion of one holy catholic church and you at the same time remove the cause for reproaching the Sect System. So declared the Puritan Recorder![15] The only supernatural character Puritanism will allow the Church, says Nevin, is ". . . in the form of an invisible communion, representing all those who are happy enough, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to find the truth."[16]

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[14] Ibid., pp. 438-39.

[15] Nevin, "Early Christianity," citing the Puritan Recorder (August 23, 1849; September 6, 13, 1849), pp. 587-90.

[16] Ibid.

Whether in the Congregational, Presbyterian or Baptist form, Puritanism rejects the idea of a ministry divinely established and drawing its rights and powers from heaven, forming in its corporate character the bond of unity for the church and the channel of grace for ministers whom it makes to be "much like town or country officers," or "at best only good religious counsellors and teachers, whom the people create for their own use and follow as far as to themselves may seem good."[17]

Puritanism takes the sacraments for divine institutions only in the sense that they were commanded by Christ. They carry in them no power or force beyond the virtue derived from them by the activity of the worshipper's mind.

A like contrast holds between early Christianity and Puritanism in regard to the "rule of Faith." Puritanism contends that the Bible alone, interpreted by the individual under the guidance of God's Spirit and with such helps as he may happen to have at his command, is the sole rule of faith. Puritanism completely disavows any relation to the Apostles' Creed. According to the Puritan Recorder,

> The experience of two centuries has shown that the Creed and Puritanism have not a kindred spirit. The first Puritans did not discard what is called the Apostles' Creed, but expressly allowed its use, and by a sort of courtesy, gave it a place beside their formularies and catechisms. It even had a place in the New England Primer. But its life and spirit never entered into the life of the Puritan churches. And, consequently, it now exists among us as some fossil relic of by-gone ages. And we look with a sort of pity upon those who are laboring to infuse life into it, and to set it up as a living ruler in the Church. We are free to confess, that this Creed has forsaken the Puritans, and gone over to become the idol and strength of all branches of anti-puritanism.

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[17] Ibid., pp. 541-42.

> And there are good reasons; for Puritanism builds on the Scriptures, and this Creed teaches, in several respects, anti-scriptural doctrines. It is true, that most of it is capable of a sense which harmonizes with the Scriptures, and so the Puritans received it in a sense consonant with their theology--either leaving out, or putting a strained sense upon the passage which asserts that Christ descended into hell. But it is neither safe nor expedient to receive such a document, in such a perverted sense. For the document once being admitted, and its authority being made to bind the conscience, then the way is open for those who hold the errors held by its authors, to plead that we are bound to receive it in the sense which its authors gave to it, and this makes it an instrument of corrupting the faith of the gospel.[18]

Actually, says Nevin, Puritanism like the sects, never allows the Bible alone to be the rule of faith for all its disavowal of tradition and its championing of private judgment. While it rejects the tradition of the Church as inimical to the rights of reason and conscience, it has its own traditions which carry the individual along and color his understanding of the Bible.

The New Testament, says Nevin, refutes this whole scheme. It makes it clear that Christianity started not with the Bible but was based on a living authority which started with Christ and passed over from him to the ministry of the Church. The Church itself did not fix the canon of the Bible until the fourth century, hence it is obvious that the early church had not the slightest notion ". . . of a bible, out of which every man was to fetch the doctrines and practices of religion as best he could with the bucket of his own common sense. . . ."[19] Puritanism presents a curious spectacle, on the one hand condemning the iniquity of the Church after it became apostate, and on the other hand accepting as its sole rule of faith the Bible which comes to it through the hands of that same apostate Church.

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[18] Nevin, "Puritanism and the Creed," pp. 587-88.

[19] Nevin, "Early Christianity," p. 551.

> It is not strange that we should be under obligation to such a growing mystery of iniquity for so excellent and holy a gift (the Bible), and that coming to us in this way we can still be so sure that every line of it is inspired, so as to make it the only rule of our faith? Is it not strange that the very church, which had still divine tact enough for the delicate function of settling the canon, had at the same time no power to see or feel her own glaring departures from the light of this infallible rule, but actually gloried in it as the oracle and voucher of her claims . . .?[20]

Nevin also comes to the defense of the papacy against Puritan criticism of it as the full bloom of apostacy. He agreed that the ages of undisguised popery were ages of darkness and barbarism, but they were not of the church's making. Indeed it was the Church, ruled by the popes, which was the rock on which waves of barbarism broke themselves.

The Puritan hypothesis is false, says Nevin! There never was any period of "unchurchly evangelicalism" in the early history of Christianity. "It is far easier to believe Puritanism an apostasy in its rejection of the mystery of the church and its sacraments" than to believe that the Church, even while Christ was showing himself present in its triumphant march forward, should drift without knowledge or resistance into the gulf stream of total apostacy for a thousand years or more.[21]

A study of the work and writings of Cyprian, the great church father of the third century, convinced Nevin of the soundness of the contrast he had drawn between Puritanism and early

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[20] Ibid., p. 530. [21] Ibid., p. 560.

Christianity. Nevin found in Cyprian a scheme of theology which began with a doctrine of the Church which was based on the order of the Apostles' Creed and was generally held by Christendom East and West in his day. Cyprian held

> . . . that the Church was literally a Divine constitution, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; that it grew out of the mystery of the Incarnation, and had its perpetual charter in the living power of the Apostolical Commission; that it bore thus the character of a true historical organization in the bosom of the world's present life; that under such outwardly visible and historical form, it carried in itself at the same time real heavenly and supernatural powers, actual virtue and force above nature for its own more than earthly or natural ends, that the exercise of these powers was through functions and organs ordained of God, and centering in the ministry of the episcopate, which was derived by clear succession from the office of the Apostles, and in the character of a solid corporation formed at once the basis and the bond of unity for the universal organism; and that there was no room consequently to think of salvation, except in the bosom of this most real system, and through its instrumental mediation and help.[22]

Nevin says he does not propose to pass judgment on the truth or error of the whole scheme, but simply to say the scheme involves not the slightest resemblance to the system of Protestantism which is being defended by New England Puritanism as a return to Christianity as it was before the Roman apostacy subverted it.

The modern Puritan theory, declares Nevin, is a distinct departure from the faith of the Reformation and of the early Church--a fact which it allows in its disavowal of the Apostles' Creed--and is constitutionally rationalistic. It has a distinct affinity for the Rationalism which grew out of a tendency involved in the very nature of Protestantism from the beginning, namely, the tendency to assert the claims of the subjective and the rights of the individual as against the authority of the general and the right of the objective. Romanism had sacrificed the former to the latter. Calvin and Luther managed to hold the two principles in balance, but they never reconciled them. The Protestant tendency finally broke out and ran into sheer subjectivity first in Pietism, then in Rationalism which reduced all religion to the character of the most flat natural morality. Rationalism, says Nevin, affected to be "too spiritual" to make such account of "outward forms and exercises of any sort in religion," and resolved all "into exercises of the worshippers' mind." The supernatural was made to sink into the form of the simply moral.

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[22] J. W. Nevin, "Cyprian," Mercersburg Review, IV (September 1852), 420.

Sectarianism was an equally false and parallel development to Rationalism of the subjective principle. In spite of broad differences between the two, they parallel each other at many points. Sectarianism involves in the end the worst errors of Rationalism.

> Both systems are antagonistic to the idea of the Church. Both are disposed to trample underfoot the authority of history. Both make the objective to be nothing, and the subjective to be all in all. Both undervalue the outward, despise forms, under pretense of exalting the spirit. Both of course sink the sacraments to the character of mere outward rites, or possibly deny their necessity altogether. Both affect to make much of the Bible; at least in the beginning; though sometimes indeed it is made to yield, with Sectarianism, to the imagination of some superior inward light from God; and in all cases, it is forced to submit to the tyranny of mere private interpretation, as the only proper measure of its sense.[23]

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[23] Nevin, The Mystical Presence, p. 148.

The idea of Christianity as a supernatural order of life unfolding itself historically in the world is lacking in both systems.

Nevin saw the Sect System and New England Puritanism as blood brothers and as typical of all that was wrong with American Protestantism of his day. As church systems they had cut themselves off from the main stream of the Church as it had developed steadily from the time of the apostles into the Roman system, and from the main stream of the protestant church life of the sixteenth century. Nevin had convinced himself that the claim of Protestants to be a reprintination of primitive Christianity was completely false. The Sects as well as the main line denominations and confessions were rather to be characterized as essentially rationalistic in theology and in practical church life. So far as their relationship to the ongoing process of historical Christianity was concerned they stood in the position of mere negative Romanism, having lost most of the positive life of the Reformation. This is the dilemma of Protestantism. It has no positive life of its own and it spurns all contact with the old catholic faith. It has cut itself off from the general, objective, enduring Fact of Christianity with its inner requirement of unity, for a system based on mere private judgment and its consequence in terms of endless divisiveness. Such a Protestantism cannot long stand. Where then does one turn for the answer to the Church problem in terms of a truly catholic Protestantism?

Nevin saw this problem being grappled with in a dramatic manner in the Tractarian Movement in the Anglican Church. It was this movement, as we have noted, which gave him his first glimpse of sound church feeling during his years at Western.

Nevin viewed the Oxford or Tractarian Movement in the Church of England beginning 1833 as an example of the way in which the question of the nature of the church had been challenging reconsideration. The Tractarian Movement was an attempt on the part of a group of Anglican churchmen--notably Keble, Rose, Froude, Pusey, John Henry Newman--to establish a doctrine of the Church which would protect it against the growing liberalism and Erastianism in England. By means of an extended series of tracts, sermons, and the publication of the works of the early church fathers the Tractarians sought to establish the fact that the church was a body independent of the state with rights, privileges and prerogatives which were not derived from the state and could not be taken away by the state. They based their claim on the authority of the church as derived from the Apostolic Church and confined to and passed on through the bishops via ordination. The Episcopate in succession from the apostles is the only guarantee of the preservation of right doctrine and the condition of validity in the administration of the sacraments. They found the authority of the Church in the apostles, its doctrines in the creeds, Nicea being the foremost. The Tractarians argued that the dominant note of the Church of England was "antiquity" and Newman had the confidence that the Tractarians were upholding "that primitive Christianity which was delivered for all time by the early teachers of the church, and which was registered and attested in the Anglican formularies and by the Anglican divines. . . ."[24] In the summer of 1851 in an extended article in the Mercersburg Review titled "The Anglican Crisis" Nevin lauded the movement for the fact that it was forcing attention to the question of the Church, particularly as it relates to the nature of Protestantism and the issues between it and Romanism. The movement was pointing up a broad question which all Protestants needed to face: should Protestantism discard the whole concept of the Church and sacramental grace, as it stood in universal authority before the Reformation and as it was espoused by Luther and Calvin, and fall back on the Bible and private judgment as the true and only safe rule of Protestantism? This is clearly the tendency of reigning Protestantism, said Nevin, and it is both unhistorical and rationalistic.

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[24] J. H. Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (Longman's Green and Company, 1902), p. 35.

Nevin saw the Anglican agitation as part of a general movement then in progress which was raising the question of the Church, the English equivalent of the re-examination of the church question in Germany. Within this movement he saw several church theories at work. In America the Puritans and the sects despised the doctrine of the Church. In the Church of England he saw the issues drawn between the "no church, no sacrament" party which had reared its head in contention with Anglicanism of the Tractarian School. Alongside this was the Church theory of Catholicism.

As an example of the significance of the Oxford Movement Nevin says the problem of baptismal grace now agitating the Anglican Church should concern all Protestants. The question of whether the sacrament of baptism carries grace for the remission of sins or whether the idea of sacramental grace is to be minimized or scorned is at bottom a choice between "Church or No-Church." Protestants ought not scorn as silly puerility the grave concern of Puseyism to uphold the old idea of baptismal grace.

As we have noted Nevin was critical both of the Anglican Church and the Tractarian Movement, in its early phases, for the attempt to make episcopacy in outward succession from the time of the apostles in and of itself the article of a standing or falling church on the basis of ". . . a stiff persuasion that certain arrangements are of divine appointment, and a disposition to stickle for them accordingly as the lines and stakes that go to fix the corporation . . ."[25] The feeling that this claim does not provide sufficient ground for the Church has constituted the great benefit of the Tractarian movement in its later phase as an open reconsideration of the relationship of Anglicanism to Romanism, despite the tendency it shows to pass over to full Romanism. Here Nevin doubtless had in mind Newman's discussion of the problem of the relationship of Anglicanism to Romanism, which began as an attempt to defend the Anglican position and ended in his going over to the Roman Church.

Newman dealt with this problem beginning with The Prophetical Office of the Church. Here Newman noted that the church is divided into three main portions, the Anglican, the Greek and the Roman communions. The western church composed of the Roman and

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[25] Nevin, "The Anglican Crisis," p. 377.

Anglican communions holds in common (1) fundamental dogma, that is, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and such doctrines as the Trinity, and the Incarnation as necessary to be believed for salvation; (2) belief in the supernatural grace of the sacraments; (3) the apostolical succession. In addition, both systems held to the obligation of faith and obedience, and in the eternity of future punishment. However, whereas Anglicanism held fast to the primitive faith in its purity, Romanism in its authorized dogma and its working system had unjustifiably added to the faith and practice of the church extraneous elements, such as the theory of transubstantiation, papal infallibility, Mariolatry, the worship of saints, etc. The Anglican Church lacked the note of Catholicity, that is, it was not in communion with the church in all lands as was Romanism, but the Roman Church had departed from antiquity. To the Roman contention that Anglicanism had no seat of final authority, the Anglicans replied that the idea of infallibility was false not only to the conditions of human reception of the truth but that the assumed infallbility of the present Church overrode the historical evidence of antiquity where the most authoritative dogmas were fixed by the creeds of the undivided church. In the case of fundamental dogmas the writings of the early fathers give a sufficient ground of certainty. That is, in the early church there was such a thing as authority but no such thing as infallibility. Therefore, on matters not thus defined the church had authority to speak. While Anglicanism lacked catholicity, she did have antiquity on her side and this weighed the balance in her favor. Newman also magnified the office of the bishop whose slightest wish was his command. Anglicanism was in communion with antiquity and took her stand on the apostolic succession of bishops, the faith of the creeds, the doctrines of sacramental grace, and anti-Roman-Catholicism.

Up to 1839 Newman had faith in this theory, the Via Media, which he and fellow Tractarians such as Pusey felt to be a middle ground between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, especially the Lutheran and Calvinist churches. Newman subsequently became convinced that this was only a paper theory to which Anglicans did not really subscribe, and further that Rome had antiquity on her side also. In Tract 90 published in 1841 he set about to determine to what extent the 39 Articles of Anglicanism were capable of a Catholic interpretation, that is, to what extent they were in agreement with the basic elements of the faith once delivered and now held by Anglicans and Romans. He concluded that the articles had been drawn up as a protest against the errors of popular Romanism and not against Roman dogma, and that once the Calvinist element in the Articles was cut away the Articles could be interpreted in a Roman Catholic sense. The storm raised by this Tract and the general condemnation of it by the bishops of the church helped convince Newman that the Via Media was only a paper theory. His doubts of the tenability of the Anglican position were agitated by the more extreme of the Tractarians, as for example, W. G. Ward, and by the affair of the Jerusalem bishopric wherein the Anglican Church appeared to him to countenance heretical dogma. In his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 1845, Newman came to the conclusion that the primitive church contained the germs of certain doctrines which under divine care have developed into their present shape. The Roman Catholic beliefs of the nineteenth century are substantially the same as those of the apostles only more explicitly defined and amplified. This conclusion took away his feeling that the post-apostolical doctrines and dogmas of Romanism were a departure from antiquity.

It was only a matter of time until Newman left the Anglican Church and joined the Roman Church. His secession did not shake Kebel and Pusey who stood fast on the ground of the Via Media and the conclusions of Tract 90. These principles were subsequently accepted as at least a possible interpretation of Anglican doctrine.

Thus, Nevin holds, the ecclesiastical pretensions of the English Establishment are being powerfully sifted and tried, and the near and close competition in which it was being placed with a resurgent Romanism in England shows the hollowness of its claim to be in harmony with the old Catholic doctrine of the Church. A point in case is the question of ecclesiastical supremacy, or the true and rightful headship of the Church and its legitimate relation to the state. There can be no doubt that the Romanists and the Tractarian Movement, to the extent to which it has involved a revival of church principles and old catholic ideas, are in the right for opposing the notion of civil supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs as against the Establishment and its subservience to the civil power. He noted with approbation the exodus of the Free Church of Scotland on the principle that the church ought to be independent of the state in church matters.

In his articles on "Early Christianity" in 1851 Nevin concluded that the Anglicans are on shaky grounds in maintaining that they are in the tradition of the "old Catholic Church." Nevin notes the Anglicans' fondness for making a great distinction between the first four or five centuries and the ages that follow and of boasting that the English Church distinguished itself at the Reformation by its ability to discriminate between the purity of the primitive faith and its subsequent adulteration by the Roman apostasy. This boast is lame and desperate, says Nevin, in view of the fact the main feature of Anglicanism is episcopacy with a king at its head instead of the pope, and a few other peculiarities beside.

The fight waged by Tractarians and Roman Catholics against state supremacy in England is one committed to the principle that "powers and rights ecclesiastical come not from kings and parliaments, but from the divine constitution of the church itself upheld and maintained by the perpetual presence of its own head."[26] The failure of the English state and Establishment to give the Roman Church full liberty, and the anxiety produced by the defection of Newman and others to Rome betray a weakness, a lack of ability to assert and carry out in full the proper functions of a church. Nevin saw that the secessions to Rome grew precisely out of the knowledge that the Anglican Church could not make good on its pretensions to being a true church in line with the old catholic truth. If the Anglican Church were certain of its position, "why should the bellowing of the Roman bull disturb, even for a moment, the serenity of the British lion?"[27]

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[26] *Ibid.*, p. 382.

Anglicanism plainly has no satisfactory response to the problem of a truly Catholic Protestantism. Nor does any other Protestant sect or fragment of the general movement have the answer. What are the alternatives on the church question? To reach a satisfactory answer Protestantism must ascertain the real meaning of its protest against Rome. If the Reformation was a complete rupture with the old church, then Puritanism was right and the best course is to break with both Episcopacy and Presbyterianism and fall over into Baptistic Independency. Is it essential to Protestantism to carry along "a sense of divine powers and to assert them in the form of true sacraments and keys that are taken actually to open and shut the kingdom of heaven?"[28] If so, can Anglicanism by the mere weight of its ecclesiastical machinery be trusted to meet the requirement? And if not, is there no hope but to return to Rome? Or can it be hoped that Protestantism carries the promise of a better future by passing to a new and higher position which shall be both Catholic and Protestant? The problem is, "How shall the demands of the old Catholic faith be satisfied in true union with Protestant freedom?"[29]

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[27] Ibid., p. 388. [28] Ibid., p. 392. [29] Ibid., p. 395.

Generally speaking Protestantism is faced with four alternatives on the Church. The first is to give up the sacramental system altogether and fall over into the extreme of unchurchly orthodoxy, Baptistic Independency. The second is to despair of Protestantism and return to Rome. The third is to hope for a new dispensation on the part of God through some fresh apostolic commission which would supercede both Romanism and Protestantism. Nevin saw Swedenborgianism, Irvingianism and Mormonism as standing on this ground. Irvingianism he held to be a respectable and significant birth of church life, but he held Mormonism to be a "wretched caricature" of the same tendency. These alternatives on the church question do not exhaust the possibilities, however.

> A fourth and last resort is offered, the only one it seems to us which is left for the thoughtful, in the idea of historical development; by which, without prejudice to Catholicism first in its own order and sphere, or to Protestantism next as a real advance on this in modern times, though with the full acknowledgement of the faults and views of both systems, it is assumed that the whole present state of the church is transitional only and interimistic; and that it is destined accordingly through the very crisis which is now coming on--not just by a new miracle setting aside the whole past as a dead failure, but in the way of true historical progress, which makes the past always the real womb both of the present and the future--to surmount in due season the painful contradictions (dialectic thorns), of the Protestant controversy as this now stands, and so to carry it triumphantly forward to its own last sense (the type neither of St. Peter nor of St. Paul but of both rather as brought together by St. John), in some form that shall be found at the same time to etherealize and save, in the same way, the last sense also and rich wealth of the old catholic faith.[30]

Nevin suggests that his discussion has had in mind Thiersch's Lectures on Catholicism and Protestantism and notes that after struggling with the very questions raised in "The Anglican Crisis"

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[30] Ibid., p. 396.

Thiersch espoused the cause of the Irvingites. For all his respect for Thiersch, Nevin said he had no patience either with Irvingism or with its opposite Puritanism, the former assuming that Catholicism and Protestantism had run out and a fresh start had to be made, or with Puritanism which buried the Church for a thousand years or more in order to resurrect it in the sixteenth century. If it comes to a choice between either view and Romanism the decided advantage lies with Romanism. So Nevin declared during the summer of 1851.

In view of this statement and others to the same effect in "Early Christianity" and "Cyprian" the question arises as to whether or not he seriously considered going over to the Roman Church as a live alternative. Did he see the choice lying between Rome, the Sects, Puritanism, and/or a new apostolate? Or was the choice between Rome and staking his future on the hope that Protestantism would develop into a truly Catholic Christianity? He had been a consistent and ardent champion of the German theory of historical development as developed by Schaf in The Principle of Protestantism and What Is Church History?, and as we have seen he declared in 1851 that of the alternatives open on the church question this was the only one open to the thoughtful. It was on this ground that the only real defense of Protestantism could be made.

Schaf assumes throughout these two works, says Nevin, that Christianity is historical, that is, it is an order of life which has evolved and which, in the midst of continual progress, has remained one and the same with unbroken continuity.

Christianity in the form of the church started in Christ himself and has required for its completion, like all life, a steady evolution in the outward flow of life, its present always bound indissolubly to its past and carrying in its womb always the life of the future.

Nevin holds that this view of the historical character of Christianity is disavowed both by Romanism, which claims for itself the character of unvarying stability from the beginning, and by Protestantism which admits that there have been changes but that the changes were no more than diabolical corruptions which must be thrust away in order for the Church to fall back again to what it was in the beginning.

Nevin agrees with Schaf that Protestantism cannot be vindicated on this ground, but rather only as it is viewed as a logical stage in the evolution of the Christian faith. In line with the "truly historical character belonging to Christianity" the main stream of its life prior to the Reformation "lay mainly in the bosom of the Roman or Papal Church."[31] One may admit "a great apostacy from the truth, in its general history," but Protestants who accuse the Roman Church of total apostacy must ask and answer some important questions:

> Can the church, as a continuous body in the world, ever perish? If the corruptions of the nominally christian world must be allowed to have involved a total falling away from Christ in the Middle Ages, how far back must such fatal apostacy be carried? Is Christianity to be regarded as a failure substantially for one thousand, or six hundred, or three hundred years? What becomes, in such case, of Christ's

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[31] J. W. Nevin, "True and False Protestantism," Mercersburg Review, I (January, 1849), 91.

> words: "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world;" and again: "On this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." Did it after all disappear in the middle ages? If not, where was it, and what world mission was it then employed to fulfill?[32]

The answer to this general problem is that Protestantism, as it emerged in the Reformation must be viewed as the product strictly and truly of the previous life of the Church as it developed under its Roman Catholic form. It stands neither in mere opposition to Rome or the errors of the papacy, nor does it involve a break in continuity with the old faith. Protestantism is genuine Christianity only in proportion as it remains rooted in the sense of an imperishable Christianity which has come down through the medium of Christ's outward historical church from the time of the Apostles. Protestantism

> . . . is the life of the Old Catholic Church itself, reaching over by inward historical development, to a new and higher form. . . . The conservation namely of that ancient life, advanced now, by the long deep world-struggle of a thousand years, with the gain of incalculable new wealth, such as the Church as never occupied before and never could have been brought to occupy in any different way.[33]

Nevin further agrees with Schaf that Protestantism itself has a history of inner development reaching from the sixteenth century to the present time involving the revelation of serious and alarming evils in its own life. Puritanism, whether right or wrong, represents a material variation on the original spirit of the Reformation. Broader deviations of a definitely "bad character" are to be seen in Rationalism in Europe and rampant sectarianism in America. These do not render Protestantism inherently false; they do show it to be neither complete nor infallible and are constitutional diseases inherent in the nature of Protestantism which require to be worked out of it by the course of its own life.

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[32] Ibid., p. 94.

[33] Ibid., pp. 96, 98.

Applying the idea of historical development to the life of the Church implies that Protestantism is not the full or final end of Christianity. Its present state is interimistic, a period of transition to some newer and higher order. It must first surmount its own difficulties, and the disorders incident to the movement must be brought out and exhausted before the Church can achieve a "higher state."

> The general nature of this higher state of the Church, moreover, may be argued from a proper consideration of what is needed to complete the mission of Christianity. It must take up into itself the whole life of the world on all its sides, art, science, government, etc., fulfilling thus the dream of the Catholic Church, but all at the same time in a free spiritual way according to the genius of the true Protestant Church. The Catholic and Protestant tendencies must come together with inward organic union, and in this way be delivered severally from the hurtful aberrations to which each must ever be exposed in a separate view. This implies of course no return to Romanism; it is all involved rather in the outward movement of Protestantism itself and is simply the necessary form of its ultimate completion.[34]

The last form or higher state toward which Christianity is moving, said Nevin, is probably near at hand, and its coming could be expected to form an epoch in history quite as great at least as that of the Reformation. The result of the new development will be the recovery of Protestantism from the evils under which it now suffers, and, at the same time, a vindication of Catholicism also--each as having been of true historical necessity for its day for the full working out of the Church.

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[34] Ibid., p. 100.

Nevin notes that recently two ideas of the theory of historical development have been projected, that of Schaf and that of Mr. Newman in his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. Newman, he says, holds Christianity to be an objective fact in the world, identical with itself, but having undergone serious modifications in outward form and aspect. To account for this he advances the "theory of developments" according to which he holds that it is of the nature of a living idea to expand and take new form as it comes into contact in the course of history with new relations requiring its application in new ways. The idea, however, must carry with it the "type and norm" of what it was in the beginning. This theory of Newman's differs from the German idea of development as expounded by Schaf. Newman holds to the continuous expansion and enlargement of the idea of the Church under the same form and in the same general direction. The process involves no disorder or contradiction and is simply the development of what the church was in fact and intention from the beginning in a way which relates it to the movement of history from age to age. Each development is in itself normal and full and so of force for all time. Newman's theory, says Nevin, moves in the line of Catholicism only and leaves no room for the growth of the idea of the Church into anything like Protestantism which is to be regarded as a corruption of the original idea of Christianity by which it is changed into another type and fashion altogether.

The German theory holds, on the contrary, that growth is a process carried forward by the action of different forces, working separately and often contradictorily, toward an end which will represent in full unity the true meaning and power of the whole. Each side of the movement is necessary and right in its own order and time, but only relatively so and must complete itself by passing into a higher form. In this view, Catholicism is a true and legitimate movement in the Church, but an explication of one side, namely, that of authority. But Catholicism, excessive in its own direction, prepared the way for a reaction in the other direction. This reaction came in Protestantism which came from the old church, not by way of quiet or uniform progress, but with a certain measure of violence. Here again Protestantism with its emphasis on freedom is only relatively good, and has become one-sided, excessive and full of wrong. In "Early Christianity" (1851) he said:

> Hence the need of still another crisis (the signs of whose advent many seem already to see) which may arrest and correct this abuse, and open the way for a higher and better state of the church, in which both these great tendencies shall be brought at length happily to unite, revealing to the world the full sense of Christianity in a form now absolute and complete.[35]

Protestantism can be justified and defended, particularly with reference to any relationship with primitive post-apostolical Christianity, only as it is understood as having derived "genealogically, from the historical church of previous ages; which at the same time is seen to carry in it the leading features of Romanism away back to the Nicene age, and in element or germ at least beyond that also up to the very middle of the second century."[36] It follows, says Nevin, that any zeal for Protestantism which is based on anti-Roman sentiment turns the faith not only of the middle ages but of the ages that went before into a tissue of abomination. Such zeal for Protestantism is not entitled to any sort of respect. Protestantism is a development out of Roman Catholicism, and its future is bound up with Roman Catholicism. Protestantism, as it now stands, can never be acquiesced in as "a fixed and ultimate fact in the history of Christianity."[37] The issue with regard to the Church is in flux, moving toward "a more perfect state," and "new order" which will not be reached without the "cooperation and help of Romanism."[38]

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[35] Nevin, "Early Christianity," pp. 38-39.

Nevin and Schaf use language which tempts one to describe them as Hegelian on the theory of development. Schaf says that the development of the Church involves a threefold form of action in the Hegelian sense in which each new stage negates the preceding one in a process carried forward by means of dialectic opposites and extremes. Actually, Nevin and Schaf do not admit a real antithesis or break in the Hegelian sense between Romanism and Protestantism in the Reformation, though they undoubtedly thought of the subsequent developments in Rationalism, Sectarianism and modern Puritanism as radical breaks with the ancient Church and with Rome. These groups, however, represent a pseudo-Protestantism. True Protestantism does not stand in mere opposition or contradiction to Rome; it does not involve a break in continuity with the old faith. It is rather the life of the old moving by inward development to a newer and higher form; it is an advance on or unfolding of the previous life of the Church. Nevin and Schaf disagree with Newman when he holds that the development is only in the line of Catholicism, involving no disorder or contradiction, but they are in agreement with Newman in insisting that whatever development takes place must be the norm and type of what the church was in the beginning; that there is a core of unchanging elements which is gradually expanded in history.

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[38] *Ibid.*

So the church situation as Nevin saw it exhibited a complex and somewhat baffling character. Sectarianism, New England Puritanism and Anglicanism all claim to be a return to the faith once delivered, with the sects and the Puritans claiming a return to the faith of the Bible and the Anglicans claiming a return to the Christianity of the creeds. In contrast to this group stands the Tractarians, one wing of which stands by the Anglican Church as the middle way between the extremes of Romanism and Calvinistic Protestantism, the other rejecting this position as well as the Anglican position in favor of Rome. Nevin rejects the contention of Anglicanism, the sects and Puritanism as contrary both to History and to the steady development of the early church. One gathers that he also agreed with Newman that the Via Media had no substantial basis in fact. How far he leaned in the direction which Newman travelled is a question we must yet pursue. This much can be said with certainty. As late as 1852, the terminus of our study, he held that Protestantism was standing at a critical juncture in its relationship to Romanism. The proliferation of sects, the false theology of both the sects and Puritanism which cut them off from the old catholic faith and set their faces in the direction of Rationalism and infidelity, the desertion of the distinctive faith of the right wing of the Reformation by the bulk of Protestants leaving them no character than that of negative Romanism--all conspired to place Protestantism in an untenable position leaving the weight of history to fall on the side of the Roman position. Any hope for the future of Protestantism depends on whether or not it is willing and able to see itself as standing in the tradition and succession of the old catholic faith with the Reformation as the corrective of the abuses of this faith as they developed in Romanism and as standing with the movement of history which foreshadows a reconciliation of the Roman and Protestant positions which will eliminate the position in which each stands and unite the positive principles which form the substantial core of each.

It was Hodge's contention in 1854 that Nevin had turned against everything Protestant, that his position in the Protestant Church was just as anomalous as that of Newman when he published his famous Tract 90. The anti-Protestant principles of Schaf are either included in his theory of development or are its legitimate consequences. Schaf and Nevin for a time held the theory in common, according to Hodge; but Nevin has given himself up to that element of the system which necessitates a return to Rome; while Schaf has remained true to that feature of the theory, which enables him to look on Rome as a station long since past in the onward progress of the Church, to which she can no more return than a man can become a boy."[39]

To understand the implications of his criticism fully Hodge says one must ascertain what is meant by the development of the Church. There is a doctrine of development, or of the constant advance of the Church, which all Protestants admit. Here Hodge enunciates clearly the system of thought against which Nevin has so sharply reacted. In substance it holds that Christianity is a system of doctrine supernaturally revealed and now recorded in the Bible. It can neither be added to, unfolded or expanded. It is there as fully, as distinctly as it can ever be made. Every question as to what is or what is not Christian doctrine resolves itself into the simple question, what does the Bible teach? The whole admits of no correction or modification in the light of new facts uncovered by science. As a system of doctrine Christianity is complete and unchangeable. However, the knowledge of that system, as it lies in the mind of the individual Christian, or in the Church collectively, is susceptible of progress in terms of the comprehension of what is taught in the Bible accompanied by a corresponding increase in holiness and of power to influence others for good. This increasingly deeper apprehension of the truth is of course conditioned by one's past and in turn conditions the future.

The history of the church in the first four centuries was the history of the attempt to arrive at a consistent statement on doctrines which were the subject of perpetual conflict until the mind of the Church brought to clear statement what was revealed concerning them. Their decisions remain fixed until the present time. The doctrines of the Reformation were firmly established on the authority of these decisions and have remained unchanged as resting not on the Church but on the Bible. It is not possible then to deny that there was progress in the knowledge of Scriptures in the anti-Nicene period, but since then there has been no change. They are held as part of the faith of the true Church no matter how corrupt or heterodox the outward church or body of professing Christians may become.

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[39] Charles Hodge, "Dr. Schaf's Apostolic Church," The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, XXVI (Philadelphia: January, 1854), 157.

There has also been progress in the knowledge and purity of the Church. There is no doubt that the Reformation exposition of doctrine in the Augsburg Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Heidelberg and Westminster Catechisms mark an advance in terms of clearness and correctness on any comparable works in the first fifteen centuries. It is no less certain that the evangelical churches of the present are in advance of the Reformation.

It is consistent with this view of progress to say that a later age may be inferior to a previous one. But here, says Hodge, one must differentiate between the true Church and the nominal church. The former may retain its integrity and reach its highest state of spiritual excellence in the midst of the degeneracy and apostacy of the external body.

Further, says Hodge, the Church is always equally near to Christ and to the Bible as its source of life. It does not derive its resources mediately through the church life which has gone before, but directly from Christ. Those who say that the Christian has no connection with Christ but through the Church are wrong. The individual believer gets his life by immediate union with Christ, by direct access to Christ. So with the Church! While inheriting the results and attainments of former ages to aid her in her understanding of the Scriptures, her faith rests immediately on the word of God.

This, says Hodge, is the true Protestant doctrine of development as distinguished from that of Schaf. It is obvious that on practically every point--Christology, the nature and ground of Christianity, the concept of doctrine and its history and development, the concept of the Church--it stands opposed to the concept of historical development espoused by Schaf and Nevin. It concedes nothing to the Roman Church as an integral element in the development of Christianity. Here is a static concept of Christianity as opposed to a dynamic, evolving, organic Christianity.

There are several things wrong with the German theory of development according to Hodge. It is confessedly a departure from the orthodox Protestant view, as comparison with Hodge's view shows. Secondly, it has its philosophical basis in Hegelian pantheism in view of the fact that the pantheistic idea of history as the self-evolution of the absolute spirit is transferred to the Church which is interpreted as the organic development of the theanthropic life of Christ. Hodge does not accuse Nevin and Schaf of pantheism but of holding principles of pantheistic origin and tendency. Third, it involves a false view of the nature of Christianity when it denies that Christianity is a system of divinely revealed truth recorded in Scripture in definite and living form, thus confounding and contradicting the scriptural and church doctrine as to the person of Christ; modifying the whole scheme of redemption both as to its nature and application; and involving as it does the doctrine of organic development, overturning all the established views of the nature of revelation as the supernatural, objective communication of divine truth.

It is with respect to the doctrine of the Church as related to the doctrine of development that Schaf's system runs into particular difficulty, says Hodge, and it is at this point that Schaf has remained true to his theory of development while Nevin has taken the road to Rome. No man can hold Nevin's theory of the Church without becoming a Romanist. If one accepts the theory of the church as a divine life, historically carried forth in a visible organization one must exclude the idea of any development except in terms of progress which conserves the past. Protestantism in its very nature, says Hodge, is a denial and rejection of those very principles which Nevin holds gave character to the religion of the Nicene period and the middle ages--the supremacy of the Pope, the authority of tradition, the idea of sacramental grace, etc. If these doctrines are true, then Protestantism is necessarily false, and to adopt such a view of the church as Nevin has is to reject Protestantism.

To reject them as false, on Nevin's own premise, is to turn Catholicism into a lie. This whole position on the church propounds a dilemma. A church which must be true to itself back through the centuries could never develop into the system known as Protestantism as Hodge defines it. So one element of Schaf's theory, that which defines the Church, requires that the distinctive doctrines of Romanism reaching from the second century be regarded as true; while another element, that which makes Protestantism a development of Romanism, requires us to pronounce them false. One cannot hold to both sides of the dilemma; he must either give up the Mercersburg idea of the Church and adhere to Protestantism, or he will adhere to the idea of an outward church incapable of defection and give up Protestantism. Nevin has evidently given up the theory of development, since his church theory admits of no development, the religion of the early church having been identified with Romanism itself. Protestantism is therefore a lie. Hodge had no doubt but that this was the conviction at which Nevin had arrived. Schaf on the other hand has just as evidently given up the idea of the church in order to adhere to the theory of development and thus to save Protestantism. By his ability to look at the Roman Church as a stage of development long since surmounted, he tacitly admits the defection of the church before the Reformation and has remained true to his theory of development.

Hodge's article was written after several of Nevin's articles, "Early Christianity" and "Cyprian" written in 1851-1852 and after his exchange with Orestes Brownson. Any decision as to the justice of Hodge's criticism, which appear to be based largely on the articles on early Christianity and Cyprian, must hinge on what Nevin said there. Actually, the question resolves itself into the question of what his relationship to Roman Catholicism was at the time of his retirement from Mercersburg in 1852. The three series which we have mentioned are certainly definitive as showing the direction of his thought during this period of three years before his retirement.

His exchange with Brownson in the articles titled "Brownson's Quarterly Review" contains perhaps his most developed analysis of what he considered to be the defects of the Roman Catholic Church. Brownson had become a recent convert to Roman Catholicism and an ardent polemicist for Romanism. His accession to Romanism had scandalized Protestants, but pleased the Roman Catholics in view of such other recent converts, as Newman. Nevin says he does not consider Brownson to be "a mere weathercock in religion whose numerous changes of faith are sufficient to convict his last position of falsehood and folly," as some are wont to do.[40] There has been in all his religious variations a principle of steady direction from Unitarianism to Romanism,". . . the contrary poles of freedom and authority, the liberty of the individual subject and the binding force of the universal object, carried out each, by violent disjunction from the other, into nerveless pantomime and show."[41] Once he decided he could not be Unitarian the same principle made it impossible for him to stop short of Romanism. Nevin applauded both the sincerity of Brownson's decision and his championing of Romanism once he had made the break. Brownson was well fitted to defend the Roman faith because of his familiarity with American life, his Protestant background, and his zeal for his new faith. He felt too that there was between him and Brownson a kindred spirit in view of the fact that they were both aware of the fase position in which most of American Protestantism stood. But his praise of Brownson ended here. He was quite critical of Brownson's having become a "Roman of the Romans" by completely abdicating his own reasonable processes and bowing before the Roman Church with unblinking submission. Brownson the Roman Catholic has become a complete ultramontanist, ". . . not simply a learner, but a passive receiver of theological knowledge . . . having thus violently given himself to a theory of the Church which puts an end to all private thinking in religion . . ."[42] His theory of religion becomes a violent protestation against Protestantism. In his hands the Reformation becomes a movement without reason or necessity which only hindered the Roman Church which was moving steadily in the right direction. He sees Protestantism as moving from the very start by its own weight toward infidelity and nihilism, its only fair representative being found currently in transcendentalism, pantheistic atheism and communism.

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[40] J. W. Nevin, "Brownson's Quarterly Review," Mercersburg Review, II (January, 1850), 33.

[41] Ibid.

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[42] _Ibid._, pp. 40-41.

Nevin could never allow to go unanswered such wholesale denunciation of the Reformation and Protestantism despite his admiration of Brownson and his own sense of the false position of much of Protestantism. Nevin held that in turning Protestantism to no account Brownson was stooping to the same tactics and was exhibiting the same lack of historical sense as those Protestant critics of Romanism who saw in its history prior to the Reformation a "long night of unceasing desolation." It is an arbitrary and fanatic position to treat either the Reformation or the church of the middle ages as a nullity. Make out Protestantism to be as bad as one may, still,

> History here, as well as elsewhere, must be allowed to be rational, worthy of the Mind by which it is actuated. . . . It is something monstrous, on the part of Mr. Brownson, then, that he affects to make such small account of Protestantism, and will not allow it to be of any historical significance whatever, for the last end of Christianity. . . . Romanists must learn to find some sense, and not mere Devil's play in the Reformation, if they expect to be heard respectfully in the scientific world in opposition to its claims.[43]

Brownson, however, is only being consistent with the genius of church which is by its very constitution unhistorical. It takes the truth of Christianity as an outward fact, entrusted to it for safe keeping to be dispensed in an outward way for the use of men in all ages. Brownson allows the law of history to operate everywhere expect in the church which he makes "monotonously one and the same--from the beginning." He disallows any "inward moving life" in the history of Christianity but in doing so makes it as much an abstraction as do the unhistorical Protestants who "fetch all faith plump from the Bible."[44] However, if Christianity is to be unhistorical, Nevin feels that Brownson and the Catholics have more to support their arguments than do the Protestants who are similarly unhistorical by identifying themselves with early Christianity.

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[43] *Ibid*., p. 45. [44] *Ibid*., p. 46.

Nevin's chief quarrel with Brownson concerns his theory of the nature of Christianity and the radical disjunction it makes between the supernatural and the natural, between faith and reason, between the general and the individual. Brownson holds that Christianity is a revelation to man by God through Jesus Christ. It therefore belongs at least in part to the order of the supernatural and is something super-added to nature. It is necessary to our salvation and can be apprehended only by faith whose vocation is to make us sure of what transcends sense and reason. Faith, as distinguished from science and reason, rests on authority or testimony which is extrinsic both to the believer and the matter believed. Nothing less than a divine testimony can authenticate for reason what stands above reason and nature. An interpreter must be given who can declare the meaning of the revelation and put it in intelligible propositions. Since faith requires believing what God has revealed in order to salvation, the witness and interpreter must be infallible. The infallible witness and interpreter is neither reason, the Bible, nor private illumination; it is the apostolic ministry. This ministry is the organ through which Jesus Christ supernaturally bears witness to his own revelation, and it is infallible not in virtue of what it is naturally but by virtue of his supernatural presence in it. The divine commission or authority of Christ is attested to by the miracles of Christ, the miracle being God's way of assuring natural reason that he speaks in and by the person who performs it. This authorizes the conclusion that whatever he said or promised is infallibly true. This authority he invested in a body of teachers whom he appointed. He promised to be present with them always and make them infallible. This fact is attested to in the New Testament in the apostolical commission. This corporate ministry, commissioned "indefectible and infallible" by Jesus Christ, is the ministry of the Roman Catholic Church. Out of this church no act of faith can take place, for faith is a theological virtue which can be elicited only in obedience to God's authority, propounding truth in a supernatural and public way through the body of pastors and teachers belonging to the Roman Catholic Church.[45]

This apology, says Nevin, is advanced by Brownson as the only and necessary alternative to that brand of Protestantism which claims that the inspired Bible, the proof of whose divinity lies open to man's reason, is the only infallible witness man needs and that one may get the mind of God out of it for himself. This position and Brownson's alike, says Nevin, proceeds on the assumption that Christianity is a revelation of supernatural truth which men are to receive by faith, as something wholly outside themselves, and brought near to them for their use in a purely outward way. But the Protestant doctrine which makes the individual judgment the measure of truth without regard to the claims of mind in its general character reduces faith to the conclusions of logic and reason. It subordinates the supernatural to the natural, the authority of the general to that of the private and individual. Private judgment, says Nevin, has no force for reason ever as private, but becomes rational only as it ceases to be private and becomes general. Further, it has no power to bridge the gulf between itself and the supernatural object of which faith needs to be infallibly certified and insured. Catholicism makes the mistake of excluding private judgment altogether, but as between the two positions the Roman Catholic view is overwhelmingly conclusive when it argues for the idea of the Church; for the claims of Christianity in its universal, general, catholic and historical character; for the necessity of a truly divine witness and certification of supernatural truth for faith.

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[45] Nevin's summary of Brownson's position is made largely by way of quotations from Brownson's articles "The Church against No-Church," April, 1845; "The British Reformation," April, 1845; "Faith not Possible without the Church," January, 1846; "The Two Brothers, or Why Are You a Protestant," July, 1847. These are quoted in Nevin, "Brownson's Quarterly Review," pp. 50-53.

However, Nevin does not see the Catholic position as the only alternative to the Protestant since it is simply the reverse side of this defective view. Both views emphasize one side of man's nature, both make faith to rest on a conclusion of man's natural reason, both fail to allow the supernatural to come into any real union with the natural. Brownson's point of view and the Roman Catholic theory generally do violence to the totality of man's nature. It violates the freedom of the mind in the sphere of religion, the one sphere in which it should come to perfection.

> The general law of our nature is that mind must fulfill its mission, not by following blindly a mere outward force of any sort, but by the activity of its own intelligence and will, both as general and individual.[46]

Brownson ignores this basic principle when he holds that in Christianity the highest form of religion, in which man's life comes to perfection, the human mind ceases to be active altogether and becomes a passive recipient of a foreign action brought to bear on it in an outward way. The supernatural renders the natural null and void in everything that pertains to its attaining its highest state.

Nevin will agree that truth has an objective existence and is universal and independent of private thought or will. But as such it is a pure abstraction. In order to become real, it must enter into "particular thought and will."

> Mere single mind can never be in and by itself, the measure of either truth or right; it must be ruled, and so bound by the objective or the authority of the general. On the other hand, however, the general as such, mere law or object, is no such measure either, in and by itself; to be so, it must take concrete form in the life of the world, which resolves itself at last into the thinking and willing of single minds.[47]

According to Brownson Romanism sets aside the authority of this order and makes Christianity to be of force for the world wholly under an abstract form. Freedom is made to be nothing and authority is made to be all in a way which allows truth to come to no real union with man's intelligence and will. Brownson will allow the right of private judgment only where the authority of the

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[46] Ibid., p. 56. [47] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

Church ceases and never within the province of Christianity. He reconciles reason and authority by ascertaining the province of reason and confining it therein. All questions of faith are outside its province and are to be decided solely by authority. For him this is no infringement on man's liberty. True liberty is to obey God's law as it is promulgated by the Church and the Pope as its visible head.

Nevin sees this theory as the natural extreme of Romanism. The Reformation was "a legitimate and absolutely necessary reaction and protest" against it, but it made the mistake of going to the opposite extreme "making the subjective everything and the supernatural objective next to nothing."[48] Man is no passive machine merely in the business of his salvation. The cure for the Protestant extreme is not the reassertion of the Catholic extreme but the recognition

> . . . that the actualization of truth in the world, is something which can be accomplished through the medium of intelligence and will on the part of the world itself. . . .[49]

Nevin says the difficulty with Brownson's position is not that he arms the Pope with authority, but that the authority with which he arms the Pope "should be taken to supercede and nullify so completely the true idea of human freedom."[50]

> The theory rests on a wrong conception of what authority is in the world of mind, and so on a wrong conception of the true nature of the Church, as the divinely constituted organ and bearer of Christ's will among men (as we too take it to be), to the end of time.[51]

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[48] Ibid., p. 59.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., p. 60.

[51] Ibid.

Nevin is arguing that revelation should come under a concrete form, in history, and through the medium of the general life, and not as an objective force wholly on the outside of the intelligence and will of those who are to be its subjects.

Brownson's whole theory is based also on a false view of the general relation in which the supernatural stands to the natural, and the corresponding view of divine revelation. The two worlds, in Brownson's view are wholly disjoined and separate from each other.

> The truth with which faith has to do belongs to the "supernatural order," which transcends altogether, we are told, the order of nature; holds out of it, above it and beyond it; and cannot come to any organic union with it, under its own form. . . . Only by the word of God, as an outward report, it is possible for faith, in the sphere of nature, to be infallibly assured of what lies beyond in a higher sphere.[52]

Here, says Nevin, is an abstract conception of the supernatural which refuses utterly to allow it to flow into our life in any way with the natural.

Much Protestant orthodoxy makes a similar mistake, abstract supernaturalism, in the view it takes of the Bible as the medium of divine revelation. Romanism and most of Protestantism fails entirely to take into account the clear proof the Bible gives of a real union of the supernatural and natural in the person of the sacred writers. The truth which the Bible reveals is conditioned by the mind and education of the men who give it utterance and by the living human relations in the midst of which they stood.

The arbitrary sundering of the natural and the supernatural fails completely at the point of the Incarnation. It was not simply Christ's office to stand between the two worlds which met in his person and report mysteries over from one to the other in a mechanical way for the use of faith. Nevin asks, what is meant by the declaration "The Word became Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?"

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[52] Ibid., p. 63.

> Surely if the gospel means anything, we have here at least the supernatural order linked in real organic union with the natural, and showing thus the capacity of this last, to receive into itself such higher life as its own proper complement and end. . . . In Christ, most literally and truly, the supernatural order came to a living and perpetual marriage with the order of nature; which it could not have done, if the constitution of the one had not been of like sort with that of the other (man made in the image truly of God) so as to admit and require such union as the last and only perfect expression of the world's life.[53]

In the face of the Incarnation, as a real union of the supernatural and the natural, it will not do to say that the realities with which faith has to do in distinction from reason are wholly without light or evidence from reason and thus are to be taken the authority of God ascertained in some other way. Revelation is nothing if it be not the entrance of the supernatural into the realm of the natural, for what has not so entered into the life of man cannot be said to be revealed at all for his apprehension and use. Revelation, as distinguished from magic, implies the self-exhibition of God in a real way through the medium of the world in its natural form.

> The word of prophecy and inspiration is the gradual coming forth of eternal truth into time, in a like real way, through the medium of human thought and speech; a process, which com-

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[53] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

> pletes itself finally in the full domiciliation, we may say, of the Infinite Word itself in the life of the world, by Jesus Christ.[54]

If Christ's incarnation involved a real entrance into the life of the world, and Nevin believes it does, then it must stand in living relation to its total organization and with history past, present and future. This being so, says Nevin, it is not easy to acquiesce in any theory of the Church which makes it the medium of revelation in some other style. The divinity of revelation turns not on its being detached from the common life of humanity; on the contrary it is complete in proportion precisely as the supernatural is brought to enter most fully into the conditions of the natural.

Brownson's theory of Romanism further poses a wrong conception of the true nature and power of faith and of the relation of faith and reason. It leads to the consequence it seeks to shun, namely, "the subordination of faith to reason or its resolution into mere logic."[55]

Brownson's theory goes on the assumption we have noted above, namely, that the supernatural, with which faith has to do, is so sundered from the natural, as to admit no direct approach or apprehension from the side of the natural. Supernatural truth is inaccessible to the mind, and mind is moved to assent to truth by motives neither in itself nor in the object set before it, but by something extrinsic to both, by the weight of an intermediate authority which furnishes a full basis of certainty regardless of the nature of what is to be taken on trust. Says

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[54] Ibid., p. 65.

[55] Ibid., p. 66.

Mr. Brownson

> In belief I must go out of myself, and also out of the object for my motives of assent.[56]

For Nevin faith is the capacity of mind for perceiving and apprehending immediately the invisible and supernatural. Faith does not operate on the outside of reason, anymore than sense does, but opens to the view of reason "a higher form of what may be called its own proper life" namely, Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word, in which it--reason--is required to become complete, and without which it must always remain "comparatively helpless, dark and blind."[57] Faith does not simply furnish data for thought.

> It stands in rational correspondence with its contents, and involves such an apprehension of them as makes the mind to be in some measure actually in their sphere.[58]

Faith touches its object--the supernatural--as truly as sense touches its object--the natural. God authenticates himself, or gives ground for belief in the supernatural, through the very data which he presents for reason and faith. That is, God's revelation of himself in nature, needs no testimony extrinsic to itself to authenticate it. This becomes clear, Nevin maintains, in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, by whom all previous revelation is made at last complete. Brownson is totally wrong in maintaining that Christ is authenticated for faith by Divine testimony in the form of miracles. This will not do, says Nevin. No miracle could legitimate the pretensions, for example, of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith.

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[56] *Ibid.*, p. 67. [57] *Ibid.* [58] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

> The miracle itself needs to be authenticated by the living person and word of him whose commission it is appointed to seal. . . . Christ's miracles then are indeed a divine attestation of his character and mission; but their true form for this end holds at last in their relation to his person.[59]

Christ himself is the miracle who elicits from man, as he did from Peter, the confession, "Thou are the Christ." Christ authenticates himself for faith not by outward testimony or sign, but by direct communication with the rational nature of men as being himself the life of reason.

As convinced as he was that the Roman Church was a true church still Nevin saw it as a one-sided development which made the general life and objective side of Christianity to be all, thus overruling human freedom; which posited a radical dualism which refused to allow the supernatural any real union with the natural, and made revelation something mechanical and apart from the ordinary process by which truth comes to life in man; which substituted the Pope for the Bible as the ultimate authority in religion. Protestantism, on the other hand, in its extreme reaction to Romanism, makes the individual freedom to be all and the objective and the general to be nothing; makes the Bible and private judgment to be the final authority, and commits the same mistake as Romanism in making revelation something mechanical and in allowing no real union of the supernatural and the natural. Nevin believed neither in the infallibility of the Church through the medium of the Pope as its visible head, nor in the infallibility of the Bible as interpreted by private judgment.

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[59] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

> We object not to the idea of authority in the case; but we wish an authority that may show itself truly moral, answerable to the constitution of humanity, compatible with the idea of freedom. No authority, it seems to us, can be of this character that is absolutely abstract, that comes upon the subject as an abrupt and isolated mandamus from a higher sphere. To be really from God, it must legitimate itself by entering the sphere of life it seeks to rule; it must take concrete form in the world; it must win for itself a living human activity in the social system, which in the case before us becomes the Church, whereby it may have access to individual thought and will according to the general law of our nature. . . . But this is not the view Romanism is willing to allow. The infallibility must be set quite above the standing order of our life. The authority is lifted clear out of the process of humanity, and in this way ceases to be concrete and historical altogether. It has no objective mediation in the actual constitution of the world. It is wholly abstract, transcendent, superhuman; and so in the end it is not moral; leaves no room for freedom; but runs into despotism, spiritual legerdemain and magic.[60]

This is certainly not the talk of a man about to become a convert to Roman Catholicism! Even so there is the question, is he speaking of Roman Catholicism per se or Brownson's interpretation of it? Nevin was apparently much taken by the German Catholic Moehler whose handling of the differences between Roman Catholicism and the Reformation shows considerable appreciation for the position of the Reformers and sees at least some reason and sense in the Reformation. He lays much less stress also on the authoritarian side of Romanism and interprets its rise and development as the result less of doctrinaire authoritarianism and more the result of the attempt of the church to meet the needs of practical piety and human yearning. Undoubtedly Nevin's praise of Brownson as a polemicist was grounded in the belief that Brownson understood the issues at stake in the question of the Church, and, on the basis of the Church as the ground fact of Christian life, argued more cogently for the Roman position than most Protestants did for their own. Brownson's representation of the Roman Catholic position certainly repelled Nevin. It is possible he was attracted by Moehler, who he says was worth twenty Brownsons, and that he felt Brownson in his zeal for the new-found faith, had gone overboard for that side of it which attracted him.

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[60] J. W. Nevin, "Brownson's Review Again," Mercersburg Review, II (May, 1850), 321-33.

In the series on early Christianity and Cyprian Nevin piles up evidence upon evidence from the fathers of the second, third and fourth century in support of his contention that Protestantism in its New England and sectarian form is not a revival of early Christianity in the same way in which he marshalled his evidence to show that Protestants had departed from the sixteenth century doctrine of the sacraments. In general Nevin holds that from the second century on there was a steady development in church life and doctrine which emerged in the Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries and that in all material points it bore a very near resemblance to the later religion of the Roman Church.[61] It is easy enough to show that there are many points of difference between early Christianity and later Romanism, but this by no means proves that early Christianity was to this extent in agreement with modern Protestantism whether in its Episcopal or Puritan form. He goes so far as to say that on the whole range of doctrine there is even a real difference between the Patristic system and Protestantism in its original form, though he holds that the difference shows itself largely in the extremes to which Puritanism carried these doctrines in their reaction to Romanism. But admitting these deviations from the early church both by Romanism and Protestantism between the first ages and those that followed, ". . . it is still plain that the course of things was from the very start towards that order at least, which afterwards prevailed, that this later order therefore stands bound by true historical connection with what went before; and that Protestantism accordingly, as a still more advanced period in the general movement of history, holds a living relation to the first period only through the medium of the second, and is just as little a copy of the one in form as it is of the other . . ."[62] It is difficult to admit the pretense of Romanists who refuse this view and insist that their whole system has been handed down from the time of the Apostles. Protestants are just as rash when they pretend to be what things were in the first ages of the Church. If Protestantism refuses all historical connection with the church as it first started and stood afterwards for fifteen hundred years, said Nevin, if it be found at war with the true idea of divine revelation, "we for our part must give up all faith an Protestantism, and bow as best we can to the authority of the Roman Church; for an interest which resolves itself virtually into infidelity, as Protestantism under every other view in which it can be put seems to us clearly to do, has no right, as in the end also it can have no power to stand."[63]

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[61] Nevin, "Early Christianity," pp. 480-82.

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[62] Ibid., p. 48.

[63] Ibid., p. 482.

Thus, he concludes, we are shut up to the idea of historical development as the only rational apology for Protestantism in the face of its notorious disagreement with ancient Christianity on the basis of the plain and simple facts of history. He notes Newman's use of the doctrine of development to account for the fact that there were considerable changes in the history of Christianity before the Reformation. The whole theory, however, as handed by Newman has been condemned by other Romanists who stickle for Catholicism as a stable entity, Brownson being among them. Nevin did not go along with those whom he called the "stability brethren" either in the Roman or Protestant point of view.

The theory of development, he continues, has been used in a variety of ways to cope with the church problem. We have noted his reference to Thiersch's "Lectures on Catholicism and Protestantism" which see the history of the Church as a complicated process, moving toward its final consummation through stages of progressive corruption. Thiersch sees Protestantism as having been called forth of inward necessity by the corruption and abuses of the Roman system, but as now corrupted itself by rationalism beyond hope of recovery. Both Catholicism and Protestantism must come to an end to make room for a new supernatural apostolate in all respects parallel to that which called Christianity into being in the beginning.

Professor Rothe in his Theological Ethics and The Beginning of the Christian Church uses the idea of development also. He takes the idea of the church to be accidental rather than essential to the religious life of the world. The state is the ultimate and only fully normal order of man's existence, and it must eventually complete itself by embracing all that religion signifies. The process by which the world is fulfilling itself, however, is marred by the fact of sin and the necessity of redemption. This implies the need of a new power brought into the world, different from the natural life of the world, but fitted to transform it into its own image. Christianity embraces this new power and the Church is its form of organization as distinct from the state. At first the church was in opposition to the state, but its relationship to the state is fluid, so that as the state receives more and more power of the Christian life through the Church, the mission and work of the Church shrinks until its authority becomes a source of oppression and restraint. Eventually the state rebels against the idea of the Church as an exclusive institution for the purposes of religion. In this context one sees the Reformation as the breaking up of the old catholic doctrine of the church, something good in its time but no longer appropriate to the demands of an advanced age, in order to make room for the forces of religion under a different form, the state. There is little prospect that the need for the Church will soon come to an end but the vanishing nature of the Church has become apparent in terms of the decline and dissolution of its life, the consequences of the maturity and independence of the Christian life which breaks the old form that has become too straight for it. With all his respect for Thiersch and Rothe, both profound and learned thinkers, Nevin held their theories are unsound and false. The Church is a supernatural fact which will neither pass away nor give way to a new revelation. The revelation in which it has its ground is an abiding creation not a provisional and transient fact. Still the grappling of these men with the problem shows how real and serious is the dilemma with which Protestantism is faced. In fact, the refusal of Puritanism and the sects to admit the idea of the Church in the terms in which Thiersch and Rothe both see it, a redemptive fact, bears out Rothe's version of the Reformation, namely, the breaking up of the old doctrine of the holy catholic church and the first grand step toward its formal dissolution. We have then this result, says Nevin:

> Since Protestantism is not the same thing with primitive post-apostolical Christianity, but this last looks rather directly toward Romanism; and since, at the same time, Protestantism cannot be historically divorced from the first life of the Church and set in full rebellion against it (if the Church was originally what it claimed to be, a divine supernatural fact and not a hellish imposture) without forfeiting all title to our faith and trust; there is but one view in which it is possible to uphold rationally the modern system, and that is the view of historical development; which however must be so taken that it shall not on the one side remain hopelessly bound to the limits of the Roman system, as in the hands of Dr. Newman, nor yet on the other side run itself out into the fair dissolution of the very idea with which it started, whether this be by the Hegelian dialectics of a man like Baur, or by more respectable theories as we have from the hands of Rothe and Thiersch.[64]

The only theory of development which will suit the needs of the case is that of Schaf. If zeal for Protestantism means war against Romanism in a way which at the same time destroys church antiquity Protestantism might as well give up the contest. On the other hand, to have any regard for the ancient church, any sense of religious feelowship with it, is to see that Romanism is no fair object for persecution in the radical and rabid style of modern American Protestantism. One may oppose it but still have some sense of its just claims and merits. One need not feel that love of Christ and hatred of the Pope are one and the same thing. It is to feel also that Protestantism is not the end of the Reformation, that what it lacks in terms of the whole life of the Church as it stood in its early years may be made up from the other side of Christianity as it is still extant in the Church of Rome. Neither Protestantism in its sectarian and Puritan form nor Romanism can stand as fixed and ultimate facts. Eventually, the two must counterbalance to correct the disorder and excess of the other.

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[64] *Ibid.*, IV, 43-44.

This issue may conceivably come about in different ways. Protestantism may be taken to be the grand--though not the whole--reigning stream of Christianity into which the life of Roman Catholicism is to pour itself as a wholesome qualifying power, yielding to Protestantism the place of superior right and strength. Or the reverse of this may take place with Protestantism flowing back into the old catholic stream giving it a new spiritual tone. Or the two forces may be viewed as the contrary sides of a dialectical process which must both be taken up and so brought to an end in a new form of existence, that shall be at once the truth of both and yet something for higher and better.

So spoke Nevin in the articles on early Christianity. He says much the same thing in the articles on Cyprian, going a little farther if anything, in justifying the Roman Church and its theology and practices as a result of his intensive examination of this church father who occupies a definitive position on the early church question.

As to the three alternatives listed above he once stood firmly with the theory of development as propounded by Schaf in his two works. Now he says that so far as the vindication of Protestantism itself is concerned, on the scheme of historical development, any of the three alternatives would hold good. He still holds to the theory of historical development, but perhaps there is some validity in Hodge's estimate that he is now so preoccupied with saving the church that he has parted with Schaf on the doctrine of development and would be willing to give up Protestantism to save the ideal of the church.

The diary of William Heyser for 1852-1853 reveals an interesting correspondence with Nevin on this question. Heyser was an elder of the Reformed Church in Chambersburg and a trustee of Marshall College. He had heard that during a recent visit by Nevin to Philadelphia a priest in that city had informed his congregation that he had been authorized to request the prayers of the Church on behalf of Dr. John Williamson Nevin that he might arrive at a proper conclusion of mind as to what his duty was. At this point it was doubtless a question, as Schaf says, in the minds of Nevin's enemies and some of his friends as to whether he would become a pervert to the Roman Church on the basis of his articles on early Christianity and Cyprian. Heyser was greatly concerned about the effect that Nevin's secession to the Roman Church would have the German Reformed Church and the ministers who had been influenced by him. Heyser inquired of Nevin whether the incident had happened or not. Nevin replied:

> You may contradict the story of my having in Philadelphia solicited the prayers of any Catholic congregation for the resolution of my theological difficulties. If any priest ever proposed such prayer in the way you mention, the authority referred to must have been that of some ecclesiastical superior in his own body, and the time, I presume, some months ago when prayer for me was recommended in some of the Catholic papers. With this recommendation, though it was profusely sneered at by some of our self-styled evangelical prints, I took myself no sort of offense. Some Methodist and other pulpits prayed for me a few years ago, and I have reason to believe that Catholic prayers are quite as good and sincere, to say the least. For the honest prayers of Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, I confess myself always truly thankful; and if it be possible by prayer to draw me into the Catholic Church, I should be glad to be led into it in that way; for this would be to be led by divine grace, than which surely no guidance can be better or more safe. That I am greatly troubled with the claims of the Catholic Church, as opposed to the pretensions of Protestantism, I freely admit. It has become for me a question of life and death. One great object of my disengaging myself from all past responsibilities, has been that I might be more free to examine it without interest or constraint. My own daily prayer is, that God may enable me to know and to obey the truth, cost what it may. What are all time interests in comparison with eternal life?[65]

The evidence appears to point to the fact that at the time of his retirement fromMercersburg in 1852 Nevin had persuaded himself that there was ground for a good case for Romanism as against "pseudo-Protestantism" of his day and that the issue between them had become a "life and death" matter. He was attracted by the fidelity of the Roman Church to the substance of the Church as it developed steadily from the second century on through the middle ages. On the ground of church theory alone he might well have become a Roman Catholic. But he was repelled by the excessive authoritarianism of the system and the complete abdication of personal freedom which he saw in converts such as Brownson. He had no sympathy with the claim of the Roman Church that its faith was unvaryingly stable from the beginning or with Newman's contention that the development of Christianity had been steadily in the direction of Romanism with no chance of contradiction or of developing into anything like Protestantism. He had no sympathy with its concept of revelation and its doctrine of the relationship of faith to reason. These factors undoubtedly weighed heavily in the balance against complete abdication to Rome. Despite Hodge's conclusion that he had given up the theory of development, it is this writer's feeling that it was these objections to Romanism in conjunction with the theory of historical development which kept him from going over to Rome. Nevin was convinced that the Reformation was a legitimate development in the life of the church in conformity both with the movement of history and with the fact of Christianity as it stood in the beginning. Protestantism, in its original form, in terms of its emphasis on freedom and the rights of the individual and its large agreement with the substance of the old catholic faith was the necessary corrective of the extreme emphasis of Catholicism on the objective and general in religion and on the authority of the institution. Of the three possible forms the theory of development might take it seems to us that he was shut up to the theory of development in the terms propounded by Schaf. If the Church of the future were to combine the merits of Romanism and Protestantism it could be no other way. Certainly there was no foreseeable future when the reigning brand of Protestantism with its extreme Roman negativism and its nearness to rationalism and infidelity would fall back again into Romanism. There could be no hope either that Romanism could fall back into Protestantism in view of Brownson's characterization of it with the full blessing of the Roman hierarchy in America. The church question as the issue stood in terms of the current antithesis between Romanism and Protestantism admitted of no solution in either direction. The only hope left would appear to be the working out via the historical process of the contradictions inherent between Roman and Protestantism as well as the contradictions within each of these branches of the church. Since history moves forward by a process in which the extremes and erroneous tendencies in great and significant movements are allowed to work themselves out to the full and then are caught up in a synthesis which represents the truth of both, one can hope for the future. The present state of Protestantism, marred by sectarianism and Puritanism, was interimistic. Nevin had history on his side. Nevin could thus stand between the Scylla of Puritan private judgment and the Charybdis of heteronomous authority in Rome, for the truth of a full orbed Christianity lay in the middle between the two extremes.

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[65] This excerpt is from the diary of William Heyser for the years 1852-1853 (Private papers of Paul H. Stonesifer), Evangelical and Reformed Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.

The course of events in his own church also undoubtedly held him steady. As late as 1851 the church showed its confidence in him by refusing to condemn his articles on early Christianity despite the prodding of Berg and his followers and by its refusal to accept his resignation as professor at Mercersburg. While the Church never did officially sanction Nevin's views it at least refused to condemn them as heretical and gave him the widest possible freedom to teach and publish his ideas. When one couples his faith in history, with the fact of the confidence of his own church, and the fact that he believed that the doctrines and practices of his own church were at base sound in theology and church life, one can see ample reason for his staying within Protestantism.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

As one pursues the development of Nevin's thought from 1840 through 1852 and the reaction to his theology both inside and outside of his own church it becomes clear that Nevin's thought differed materially from the prevailing patterns of Protestant thought among the American churches of his day. The difference is defined by Hodge when he says that Nevin's system is "churchy." This is to say that though Nevin did not discount the validity or necessity of individual religious experience, his primary concern was to assert the importance of sound doctrines of sacraments, church and Christology as against the emphasis on individual religious experience which was characteristic of the Protestantism of his day.

The distinctiveness of Nevin's thought can be seen therefore in terms of these doctrines and the meaning and nature of the Christian life generally. The difference between Nevin and prevailing patterns of thought emerges first at the point of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper where Nevin holds to an actual participation in and partaking of the divine-human life of Christ with all its benefits as against the concept of the Lord's Supper as involving a communion with the divine nature of Christ and an appropriation by faith of the benefits of atonement. For Nevin the sacrament has an objective force. Its efficacy does not depend upon the faith of the recipient, though it is received only by faith. It is therefore a distinctive means of grace, a mystery, and not simply one means of grace among others and in no way a mystery as the prevailing Protestant theory held.

Nevin held that sacramental theory is basic to all sound theology and church life, and this difference on the understanding of the Lord's Supper as between Nevin and prevailing Protestant thought suggests a fundamental divergence down the line on other doctrines. The difference becomes clear in terms of Christology. Nevin's theology was grounded in the Incarnation in contrast to prevailing patterns of thought which were grounded in the atonement. The implication of this fact is to be seen in Nevin's concept of Christianity as a growing, developing, historical Fact always in organic relationship to and continuity with the person of Christ as against prevailing patterns of thought which saw Christianity as a system of doctrine divinely revealed by Christ, once and for all complete, which disclosed the means devised by God for man's salvation as well as enjoining obedience to the moral law. This makes for a difference in the understanding of the nature of the Christian life also. Nevin defined it as a life-union with the theanthropic Christ through the church in which the believer progressively appropriates the benefit of Christ's work which holds in his person, as against the view which abstracted Christ's divinity from his humanity, saw the union of the believer with Christ as a union with his divinity by virtue of the fact that the same spirit dwells in

Christ and the believer, and thought of the Christian life as one of obedience to the law of God as revealed by Christ.

Nevin's theology also necessitated a doctrine of the Church commensurate with the doctrine of the sacraments and the fact of the Incarnation. Nevin therefore saw the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation, the divine-human life of Christ with all his benefits, imparting to the individual within its folds the life-giving virtue or grace of Christ's life and at the same time having a redemptive concern for the whole of man's life as a social being. Whereas the prevailing concept of the Church held it to be a fellowship of believers, a community of regenerate individuals concerned primarily with other worldly interests.

On the question of the Church, Nevin further defined his position as against prevailing patterns of thought in America by his concept of the developing character of the Church. On this point Nevin saw the Church as an organic unity, always in continuity with itself, the unfolding in history of the Incarnation; hence the true church is always a visible church. He saw the Protestant Church as related organically to Romanism and to the substance of Christ's life as it unfolded itself in the form of faith to the old catholic church dating back to the age immediately following the apostles. Reigning American Protestantism, on the contrary, saw a radical departure immediately following the age of the apostles from the gospel delivered by Christ, a departure which eventuated in the apostate Roman Church. Reigning Protestantism saw itself as a return to the primitive purity and simplicity of the apostolic church, and thereby cut itself off from a thousand years or more of the history of the church. It saw the true church as the invisible community of the redeemed, seldom coterminous with the visible church.

The difference between the organic, developmental concept of Christianity which Nevin held and the static concept of prevailing American Protestantism involved a difference in historic and contemporary theological orientation. Contemporary Protestantism of the Reformed variety was oriented theologically to Covenant Theology as it modified rigid Calvinism, and philosophically to the empiricism stemming from Locke and Hume, and to the rationalistic supernaturalism of Germany. When one attempts to define Nevin's thought in terms of its orientation to a particular historic or contemporary tradition, one finds it difficult to attach a label to him. Many streams of influence play upon him which he sifts and combines in his thinking. On sacramental theory he was Reformed, and oriented to Calvin's doctrine, though one can say that he saw in the Reformed tradition in which he stood, especially as it was embodied in the Heidelberg Catechism, an expression of faith which brought together the sacramental theory of Calvin and of the Lutheran Church as expressed in the thought of Melanchthon. On the question of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper he saw himself as Melanchthonian-Calvinist.

On Christology Nevin saw himself as standing in the tradition of the creeds, the Apostles' Creed in particular, which he held to be the substance of Christianity, in the form of faith. That is, the Creed gives voice to what the faith of the early church apprehended as the meaning and significance of Christ's life. But for his understanding of the meaning of faith, and for the particular form which his statement of Christology took he was oriented to German Idealism. For his Christocentrism he was indebted to the thought of German Lutheranism of the "mediating school" which was oriented theologically to the Christocentrism of Schleiermacher and to Neander's understanding of the nature of Christianity. For his statement of the psychology which was basic to his Christology he was indebted to Hegelian thought through Rauch, and to the "mediating school" of Germany, for his concept of the organic nature of personality, for his doctrine of Christ as the summit and consummation of the creative process and of Christ's nature as generic.

One sees many strands of influence playing into his doctrine of the Church. So far as his concern for the Church question and the rights and prerogatives of Church he is attracted to the Tractarian Movement and to the Roman Church. He would agree with both that the Church derives its authority from characteristics which are integral to its own nature. But he disagreed with the Tractarians in finding this authority in the apostolic succession of the clergy. He was in sympathy with the high church emphasis among the Tractarians, but he began his discussion from the religious life of the church centering in the sacraments rather than from the problem of the relation of church and state and the authority of the clergy. He was attracted to Romanism for its fidelity to the idea of the Church as it developed from earliest times, but he was out of sympathy with the manner in which Romanism armed the head of the church with authority and overrode human freedom.

On the doctrine of the development of the Church, the Mercersburg men were oriented to German Idealism, and were close to Newman. They suggested that there was undoubtedly some truth in Hegel's concept of a three-fold dialectic process by which history develops. They talked of Protestantism as embodying a principle which is the opposite of the principle of Romanism and anticipate the eventual synthesis of the two opposites. They utilized Schelling's thought that Romanism, the church of Peter based on authority, would unite with Protestantism, the Church of Paul based on freedom, in the church of John, based on love. But their theory of historical development was not Hegelian inasmuch as they would allow no real break or antithesis. They saw the development rather in terms of a gradual unfolding or expansion in history of what was comprehended originally in the person of Christ. Protestantism was not a break with Romanism but an advance which brought out one side of Christianity which Romanism had neglected. In seeing the development as a gradual unfolding they were closer to Newman than to Hegel. Their concept of development is in sharp contrast to that of prevailing Protestantism as represented, for example, by Hodge.

One cannot say that Nevin was indebted to any one school of thought for his high church theology. His doctrine of the church combined elements of the church theory of Romanism, the Tractarian movement, and of German Idealism. He followed no one tradition or school slavishly, but from stimuli which came from various sources he proceeded to develop his own concepts. The distinctiveness of Nevin's position can be seen against the background of the major movements and schools of thought in American Protestantism. The broad movement known as sectarianism contained various groups which had in common certain identifiable traits. They included the Winebrennerians, the Albright Brethren, the Methodists, Quakers, Baptists, and others whom Nevin defined as taking their stand on purely arbitrary and individual interpretations of the Bible; as cutting themselves off from tradition, history and other main streams of the life of the Church; as placing no value on the Church, the ministry, the sacraments, but as relying on revivals, noise, and their own barren trandition for their place in the sun. Theologically and philosophically they were indefinable, though Nevin asserts they had an affinity for Pelagianism and Rationalism and that they belonged to the same general unchurchly, unsacramental type as did most of the Protestant denominations.

Nevin's theology is to be distinguished also from the churches in the Reformed tradition which he lumped together as New England Puritanism of varying extremes. On the right would be the Presbyterians, represented by Princeton and Western, both standing within the Old School scholasticism of the theology of the Covenants and the empiricistic tradition. Union Theological Seminary was founded in 1836 by new school men who had declared themselves as in agreement on some points with New Haven divinity though still standing with Presbyterian orthodoxy. Alongside these would be the Dutch Reformed with their seminary at New Brunswick standing in the same tradition as the Old School scholasticism. Both held to the concept of the Lord's Supper in the Zuinglian sense, both were critical of the whole of Mercersburg Theology as having a Romanizing tendency and impugning the vital doctrines of the Reformation. Within his own church was a coterie of men like Berg and Helfenstein who were oriented to this side of the Reformed faith and therefore extremely critical of Nevin. The Congregationalists were represented by Andover which took a middle course between extreme Calvinism and the liberals who rejected the basic tenets of Calvinism, but Andover was oriented still, according to Nevin, to the old rationalistic supernaturalism of Germany. Also representative of New England Congregationalism was the New Haven Divinity of Yale which had modified the basic tenets of Calvinism to make them consistent with the demands of reasonableness. From this school had come Bushnell who set himself against the experimental crisis type of religious experience.

In addition to the Presbyterians and Congregationalists were the Lutherans, who could be divided into two groups. The conservative Lutherans were trying to remain true to the Lutheran orthodoxy of the early version of the Augsburg Confession and the ultra conservatives were clinging to the Form of Concord. The main body of Lutherans, represented by the Lutheran Observer and the seminary at Gettysburg had abandoned Augsburg and the Form of Concord altogether, according to Nevin, to champion the rationalistic supernaturalism of Storr and Flatt whose work was translated by Schmucker at Gettysburg and whose doctrine of the Lord's Supper he held to be a fair representative of Lutheran orthodoxy. Schmucker advocated a revival in America of the pietistic strain of Lutheranism and opposed a Lutheranism based on sixteenth and seventeenth century orthodoxy.

Nevin held that the sects and the majority of the Reformed and Lutheran could be lumped together as having abandoned the distinctive Protestant position of the sixteenth century, as having a distinct affinity for rationalism, as holding to a static, unsacramental and unchurchly concept of Christianity. Consequently they had turned the idea of the church into an abstraction, and the person of Christ into a Gnostic fantasy. All had broken away from the old catholic faith. On the other hand, Nevin felt he was recovering the faith of the Reformation in direct continuity with the church as it stood back to the age of the Apostles, retaining the substance of the faith while placing it in more defensible form according to the insights of modern German philosophy and psychology. His was a dynamic, developing Christianity as against the static concepts of reigning American Protestantism. He lauded Bushnell's grappling with the problem of educational religion, baptism,and Christology. And one gathers that he was not completely unsympathetic with the attempts of the New England theologians to restate fundamental Calvinist concepts. But, he felt that such attempts were dead end streets since they both were based on a false reading of the true nature of the Church as a supernatural Fact, had cut themselves off from all historical connection with the main stream of the history of the church, and showed no awareness of current philosophical thought. All were operating within the confines of New England theology, or Calvinist scholasticism, with minor variations.

It is difficult, as we have noted, to say whether Nevin's thought was Romanizing, Lutheranizing or Puseyizing. Was it still in the Reformed tradition? Though he had strong sympathy for both the Roman and Tractarian concern for the powers and prerogatives of the Church, and lauded the Roman Church for its fidelity to the substance of the old catholic church, he did not agreee with either on the basis of the authority of the Church. One can say that he was both Romanizing and Puseyizing in his concern for the Church. But when it came to his dealing with the church question in all its ramifications, he leans strongly on contemporary German thought as it expressed itself in the theology of the "mediating school" of German Lutheranism. To this extent he was Lutheranizing. If one accepts his thesis that the Reformed tradition was at its core bound to the theory of the Lord's Supper, one can say that his doctrine was rooted in the substance of the Reformed tradition though he reinterpreted it in terms of contemporary philosophical and psychological insights. Nevin was Lutheranizing also to the extent that he held that the German Reformed tradition is to be seen as a synthesis of the antithetical positions of Calvinism and Lutheranism on the central doctrine of the Lord's Supper. However, in his justifying many features of Romanism widely condemned by Protestants, including popery, in his championing the validity of Roman ordination, in his espousal of the rights of Romanism as against contemporary Protestantism, in his failure to assert the centrality of the ministry of the word as parallel to the sacraments as means of grace, he undoubtedly departed from Reformed and Lutheran ground and that of Protestantism generally.

In his attempt to deal with what he felt to be the critical issue of his day, the church question, and to make Protestantism face up to its heritage, Nevin first turned to the Reformation for the substantial undergirding of his theology. In so doing he discovered in the Reformed theology of the Heidelberg Catechism the mature development of sacramental and churchly theology of the sixteenth century. This theology veered away from the harsher features of Calvinism, predestination, for example, and was ecumenical in spirit in terms of the fact that it expressed the mutual influence of Calvinist and Lutheran thought on each other in the person of Melanchthon. But Nevin was not content simply with a return to sixteenth century theology, and he attempted to reformulate the doctrines of the sacraments, the church and the nature of Christianity in terms of the ideas of contemporary German philosophy and psychology. Thus Mercersburg theology introduced into the discussion of theology in America the philosophy of Hegel and Schelling; the theology of Schleiermacher, especially his Christocentrism; the new concept of Christianity as a living developing force pioneered by Neander. By making their theology christocentric, Nevin and Schaf were ahead of American theology generally by at least a quarter of a century.

All of which is to say that Nevin refused to work within the framework of the Calvinist orthodoxy of the American Reformed churches. He fell in rather with the general revival of interest in the church and sacraments which occurred in the early nineteenth century and brought to bear on the subject the insights and concerns of the Tractarian movement, the new theological spirit of Germany, his study of the early church, and his understanding of the sixteenth century Reformed tradition. In America the Mercersburg theology represented an attempt to formulate a doctrine of the church as a religious reality and to place sacramental, educational religion at the heart of its life. As such it stood in stark contrast to the individualistic, pietistic, rationalistic, revivalistic church of prevailing American Protestantism. It can be safely said that on his major concerns and the general spirit of his theology Nevin stood in the tradition of the right wing of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. And he faced the churches which had their roots in this side of the Reformation, especially the Lutheran, Presbyterian and Reformed, with some searching questions about the ground on which they currently stood in contrast to their theological origins. He exposed the tendency of revivalistic, unchurchly Protestantism to fall over into rationalistic modes of thought.

Nevin's attempt to formulate a doctrine of the Church and to propagate a churchly understanding of the Reformed tradition takes on distinctiveness also in view of the church situation in America with respect to denominational rivalry and church divisions. Nevin labored at a time when revivalism, denominational splits, and the rise of sect groups were on the increase and were playing havoc with the general harmony and cooperation which had existed among the evangelical denominations early in nineteenth century. Nevin had witnessed, for example, the split in the Presbyterian Church into New School and Old School, the breakdown of the Plan of Union between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, the rise of the Winebrennerians who had split away from the German Reformed Church, the beginnings of the Mormon movement, etc. Nevin had witnessed the working of the revival system with its reliance on methods, its emotionalism, its tendency to fall over into rationalistic moralism, its results in terms of tension and splits within church groups and its fostering of rivalry among church groups. In the midst of all this Nevin tried to formulate an understanding of the nature of the Church which was both Protestant and universal as a basis for the unity of the Church and as an antidote for the current disunion of the Church and the proliferation of church divisions and new sects. Living as he did in a period of ferment, of sectional rivalry and consciousness, of the attempt of the churches to survive in a situation of religious freedom, Nevin was running against the tides of the time.

His thought has significance also in terms of his attempt to establish a positive Protestantism in the face of the hysterical anti-Romanism of current American Protestantism and the increasing vitality and aggressiveness of the Roman Church. The Mercersburg men waged a lonely battle in their attempt to relate Protestantism to the previous history of the Church, to show its legitimate relationship to Romanism, and thereby to relieve the tensions in this area. Here again was a significant attempt to lay a foundation for church unity as between the major divisions of

Protestantism and Catholicism, and to combine the polar attributes of authority and freedom which belonged to the true church and were the hallmarks of Romanism and Protestantism respectively.

Nevin's work was not without some fruit in his own church in the period in which we are interested. He was successful in turning the German Reformed Church away from the revival system and in restoring the Heidelberg Catechism to a place of honor and wide use. While Nevin's views were not sanctioned officially by the Church, neither were they disowned by the Church. During the period in which we are interested the Church was therefore generally sympathetic with the Mercersburg Theology though Nevin and Schaf were vigorously opposed by a minority concentrated in the Philadelphia Classis. But the seminary at Mercersburg in its formative years; the church paper, The Weekly Messenger; and the Mercersburg Review were in the hands predominantly of Nevin and those who supported him. Subsequent to the terminus of our study Nevin became a central figure in the controversy over a liturgy for the German Reformed Church. Nevin contended for a liturgy which was to center in the Holy Eucharist as against a mere pulpit centered order of worship. A liturgy was subsequently adopted which embodied the theological spirit of the Mercersburg theology though its use by each congregation was made optional. The liturgy is still used by some congregations. Opposition to the teachings of Mercersburg resulted in the withdrawal from the eastern Synod in 1853 of the North Carolina Classis, and as we have noted, Berg left the German Reformed Church in 1852, and Helfenstein in 1853. In the late

1860's another group led by J. H. A. Bomberger established Ursinus College with a theological department in protest against the continued teaching of Mercersburg views by the seminary now located at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The system which Nevin taught gradually gave way before changing emphasis in theology. While the substance of Nevin's lectures on ethics were still in use at Franklin and Marshall College up until 1923, and while some emphasis of the Mercersburg Theology such as the centrality of Christology and the historical approach to theology continued to influence the theology taught in the seminary, nevertheless, the theology being taught at the end of the nineteenth century was predominantly the liberal school of Ritschl, Harnack and Troeltsch.[1] The primary and most significant service which the Mercersburg Theology rendered the Church in the long run appears to have been that it helped the Church to break out of the pattern of scholastic Calvinism, put it in touch with its own original life and with contemporary German thought, and imbued the school with a progressive spirit which permitted it to keep pace with changing emphases in theology and biblical scholarship.

In his own day Nevin's influence on other churches in the Reformed tradition was less happy. His views were instrumental in disrupting a rapprochement between the German and Dutch Reformed churches. He apparently made no impact on Hodge despite the fact that he had shown that Hodge's views had much more of an affinity for rationalism and the sects than for the Reformed tradition. The Mercersburg movement was not completely without impact on the Presbyterian Church, however, in view of the fact that Schaf became professor of Theological Encyclopedia and Christian Symbolism at Union Theological Seminary in New York following the reunion of the Old and New schools in 1869-80. The change to the Presbyterian Church, however, involved no change in his theological views, and he was given freedom at those points at which he differed with the Westminster Confession.[2] He subsequently became an ardent champion of the abortive movement to revise the Confession by way of deleting those sections which asserted the reprobation of the wicked, intimated the reprobation of non-elect infants, and declared the Bishop of Rome to be the Antichrist.[3] He was a continuing voice in the struggle for greater liberty in theological matters.

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[1] L. J. Binkley, The Mercersburg Theology (Franklin and Marshall College: 1953), pp. 135-36.

The theology of Schaf and Nevin was vigorously attacked from the Lutheran quarter by Benjamin Kurtz who through the pages of the Lutheran Observer championed the American Lutheranism of S. S. Schmucker of the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg. Schmucker taught what he regarded as a modified Lutheranism which protested against not only the distinctive Lutheran doctrines concerning the sacraments but against those of original sin and the person of Christ.[4] In the hands of Benjamin Kurtz, as we have previously seen, this point of view was strongly tied in with New Measures, and revival meetings; Kurtz was also a severe critic of confessional Lutheranism and liturgical worship. Nevin and Schaf both protested against this trend in American Lutheranism on the ground that it was a departure from the distinctive features of sixteenth century Lutheranism. Nevin and Schaf, nevertheless, were not without influence on the Lutherans. A growing body of conservatives in the Church were becoming increasingly interested in contemporary German scholarship, according to H. E. Jacobs, historian of the Lutheran Church. This interest was the result, in part, of the influence of other denominational schools at which Lutherans studied. The greatest impulse in this direction according to Jacobs, came from Schaf whose interest in German theology influenced the Lutherans more quickly than any other denomination outside his own. _Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund_ edited by Schaf and William J. Mann, a Lutheran who followed Schaf into the German Reformed Church in America, played an important role in relating Lutherans to German scholarship and in pointing up the dangerous drift of American Lutheranism from its sixteenth century roots. Nevin also contributed to the _Kirchenfreund_ adding his voice to that of Schaf in urging that Lutherans, as well as Reformed, should return to their historic positions, or else abandon the titles which designated those positions. Nevin's attack on New Measures was also subsequently lauded by Lutherans for its beneficial effect on the Church.[5] When Mann, who had taught briefly at Mercersburg, left to serve the German-speaking Reformed congregation in Philadelphia, he worked on the Kirchenfreund before transferring to the Lutheran Church. Schaf transferred to Mann the editorship of the paper, having withdrawn from the editorship on the pretext of his trip to Europe in 1853-1854. He had been under pressure to resign, because his Romanizing tendencies were held to be injurious to the periodical. Within the Lutheran Church Mann became a strong voice in the movement to lead the church back to her distinctive ground in an unaltered Augsburg Confession.[6] Of Schaf's influence on the Lutheran Church, Jacobs says,

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[2] D. S. Schaf, The Life of Philip Schaf (New York: 1897), pp. 282-87, in Binkley, pp. 123-24.

[3] R. E. Thompson, A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States, American Church History Series, VI (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 248-49.

[4] H. E. Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, American Church History Series, IV (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 365-67.

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[5] _Ibid_., p. 418.

> In the powerful reaction that came in the Lutheran Church in America, leading it back towards its historical foundations, the influence of Dr. Schaf must be regarded as a very important factor.[7]

The Mercersburg theology apparently had no influence on the High Church Lutheranism of the Missouri or Buffalo Synods. Nevin himself held that if it came to a choice between these and the liberals of the Schmucker School he thought the right was on the side of the old Lutherans. These however were stickling for the Form of Concord, whereas Nevin held that while due reverence should be paid to the past it should be in the way of carrying forward the spirit and substance rather than the letter of the tradition. Schmucker and Kurtz accused Nevin of holding the doctrines of the Form of Concord and tried to push him into the company of the extreme conservatives. These had no desire to accept his company, said Nevin, since they held that there was a material difference between Luther and Calvin particularly on the question of the sacraments.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 424-26.

[7] H. E. Jacobs, "Dr. Schaf and the Lutheran Church," Papers of the American Society of Church History, VI (New York: 1894), 18.

During the years in which we are interested, Nevin's attempt to foster a high church interpretation of the Reformed tradition was paralleled by a struggle within the Episcopal Church in America to establish a high church tradition within that Church. The high church party which took the name "Anglo-Catholic" stood for the authority of the Church as against the rights of the individual. It was buttressed by the work of the Tractarians and eventually prevailed over the low church party which broke off and formed a separate group. Nevin and the high church Episcopalians were both interested in the Tractarians, both were concerned for the authority of the Church. But Nevin derided the high church party for claiming to be the one holy catholic church of the United States, and for branding as perverts, schismatics and apostates any who fell away from the Episcopal Church whether it was to the side of Geneva or Rome. A further serious difference with the Anglican tradition on the part of Nevin and Schaf was the insistence of that tradition on the necessity of Episcopal ordination in unbroken historic succession as the basis of Church unity. Nevertheless, both men found much in the tradition which was congenial to their concept of the Church, and evidently some American Episcopalians read their works with interest and appreciation.[8] It is possible that

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[8] C. C. Tiffany, "Dr. Schaf and the Episcopal Church," Papers of the American Society of Church History, VI (New York: 1894), 20-22.

William A Muhlenberg, Episcopalean rector for a time at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was influenced by the Mercersburg men with whom he had contact there. Muhlenberg who called himself an Evangelical Catholic worked for a broader and more comprehensive ecclesiastical system which would assure both low and high church parties a place within the Episcopal Church in America. William Porcher DuBose, the leading American Episcopal theologian of the nineteenth century, acknowledges the influence of the "Mercersburg Theology" in his dealing with the Church ". . . less as an external fact and authority, and more as a necessary principle and true philosophy."[9] The Christology of DuBose also uses terms which are strikingly similar to those used by the Mercersburg men on the Incarnation, and on the Church as the extension of the Incarnation in history.

We have previously suggested that Nevin was running against the tides of his day. His discussion of sacraments, church and christology appear actually more relevant to the current concern for the same subjects in the ecumenical movement of our day, and to the questions of faith and order which are being probed by various denominations interested in merger. As one reads Nevin he is often struck with the feeling that Nevin was at least a hundred years ahead of his time and would have felt at home in the midst of contemporary developments in Protestantism which are seeking a basis for unity arising out of its own distinctive historic and theological positions. Further Nevin would be at home in the reawakened interest of many in the concern for the nature of the Church and the question of the responsibility of the Church for the totality of man's life as against a purely individualistic concern. While the philosophical and psychological categories which were basic to Nevin's theology have been passed by with the development of modern science and of historical, critical Biblical Scholarship, Nevin would probably be the first to concede that since theology has a history our own day must seek the answer to the deepest questions of theology in terms of its own understanding of man and the nature of the universe so long as it held fast to the substance of Christianity in the form of the faith of the Church from the beginning.

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[9] Theodore DuBose Bratton, An Apostle of Reality (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936), p. 107.

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